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HIS MAJESTY KING LEOPOLD I.
(IN 1831)

THE HISTORY OF BELGIUM

PART II. 1815—1865

WATERLOO TO THE DEATH OF LEOPOLD I.
(THE END)

• BY

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“THE HISTORY OF CHINA,” “LIFE OF GORDON,” ETC., ETC.

WITH TWENTY-ONE PORTRAITS

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PREFACE.

AFTER much reflection, and with some regret, I have decided to conclude this work with the death of Leopold I. The making of modern Belgium may be considered to have been brought to completion during the reign of the ruler who was called "the founder of Belgian independence."

The facts and the men of the half-century from 1815 to 1865 have passed into the domain of history, and can be calmly discussed without prejudice or the introduction of controversial matter.

This cannot be said with regard to the reign of his successor, which has already covered a longer period of Belgian history than is dealt with in the present volume, and which is, moreover, still in progress. Time will be needed to judge the reign of Leopold II. aright with some approach to justice and impartiality.

But for Belgium herself the reign of her second King constitutes a stage in her national progress and expansion not less remarkable than that marking her creation and consolidation which forms the subject of the following pages.

I have to express my acknowledgments and thanks to those who have supplied me with the material for the illustrations; and here I must in the first place again thank M. Albert de Bassompierre for a repetition of the good offices he rendered

me in connection with the illustrations to my *Belgians at Waterloo*.

I am indebted to M. Léon van Neck for permission to reproduce from his patriotic work "*1830, Illustré*" the portraits of Jenneval, Count Frédéric de Mérode, Baron d'Hooghvorst, Baron Surlet de Chokier, and the miniature of Prince Leopold in 1814. The picture of General Chassé on the ramparts of Antwerp is from a contemporary Dutch print sent me by Colonel de Bas, of The Hague.

The Baronne d'Huart-Malou has given me permission to reproduce the portrait of her father, M. Jules Malou, which forms the frontispiece to the Baron de Trannoy's admirable memoir of that great Conservative leader, cited several times in the following pages.

Colonel Van de Weyer lent me an excellent engraving of his distinguished father, H. E. Sylvain van de Weyer, who was one of the chief architects of Belgian independence. Count Goblet d'Alviella very kindly had a photograph taken for my use of an old print of his grandfather, General Goblet, who played a prominent and highly creditable part in the events of the first twenty years of Belgium's national life.

Count de Grelle-Rogier did me the honour to place at my disposal the original of the portrait of his illustrious uncle, Charles Rogier, who more than anyone gave its true character to the Revolution of 1830.

Baron Alexis Chazal conferred on me a similar favour with regard to the portrait of his father, General Chazal, the re-fortifier of Antwerp in the 19th century, and the originator of Belgium's modern system of defence, for whom Leopold I. entertained a very special regard.

Baron Lambermont presented me many years ago with the photograph of himself, which preserves the lineaments of my late highly honoured and greatly respected friend. The portrait of Lord Palmerston is taken from a carte-de-visite photograph in my possession of about the year 1859.

I have not attempted any bibliographical list, but I may state that in the preparation of this volume, which has occupied many years, I have read hundreds of books and countless newspapers, pamphlets, and official reports, chiefly in Brussels.

DEMETRIUS C. BOULGER.

THE HISTORY OF BELGIUM.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

The Establishment of Dutch Rule.

THE return of Napoleon from Elba and the campaign which culminated on the field of Waterloo absorbed attention, and left no space in the closing chapter of the previous volume for the description of the circumstances under which Dutch rule was established in Belgium and the Kingdom of the Netherlands came into being. While the preparations for war and the active operations of the Four Days' struggle were in progress, a difficult task in constitution-making was being engineered to a successful termination—successful only as making a formal conclusion of much debate and controversy, for all the attendant evidence showed how deep was the cleavage between the races of the North and South.

Europe for its own ends had decreed an Union, and then left the ill-assorted parties to effect a working arrangement between themselves. There was the Pacification of Ghent* in 1576 for these brother races to work upon, but that pact had not lasted six months, and the causes of their differences were just as apparent in 1815 as they had been when it was a question of expelling the Spaniards. There was one marked distinction between the two situations: no option was left to the people themselves. The language of the Treaty of Vienna was precise; the order of Europe was formal. Belgium was to be tacked on to Holland, and the two were to be the Kingdom of the

* Vol. i., p. 327.

Netherlands. There was no force available to resist the fiat of the Powers.

We have seen how Prince William, impelled to take action by the unexpected escape of the Emperor Napoleon, caused himself to be proclaimed King at Amsterdam and Brussels* on 17th March, 1815. The real problem remained to establish a Government, and it was rendered infinitely more difficult by the fact that the constitution to be established was not one framed to suit the requirements of the Belgian races, to propitiate their goodwill, and to earn their support and gratitude, but it was the constitution of another people living under totally different conditions, following a hostile religion, and prejudiced by the long traditional belief that they had done in the 16th century what the Southern branches of the race ought to have done and certainly had not. It was this foreign Constitution that was to be tinkered up and applied to a free and proud people. The Dutch were even disposed to assume—as some of their spokesmen actually expressed it, “We have been a free, independent nation for 250 years, and you Belgians have never been free and independent at all”—that the Belgians had no right to make any objections to the Government conferred or imposed upon them. One of the favourite Dutch theories was that Belgium was to be an addition to Holland as a recompense for what the Orange-Nassau family had done and suffered during the Napoleonic régime. The apathy or backwardness of the Belgians in 1814 in freeing themselves from the French incubus, as the Dutch had done, also strengthened the belief that there was no public spirit in Belgium, and that its people would not combine to assert national rights. A very brief experience sufficed to alter these opinions and to show that they were delusions.

The Belgians, far from thinking themselves disqualified for self-government, or from being ready to submit themselves as the prize of the Dutch at the mandate of the Powers, were intent on recovering the ancient privileges that were always their boast and pride. They did not want a Constitution at the hands of the Dutch, because they had got one that they

* Vol. i., p. 446.

infinitely preferred from time immemorial. Restore the States, they said, confirm the charters of the Guilds, and the name of the King matters little or nothing. From inherited sympathy with what formed part of the antiquity that invested Belgian civic and national life with its special distinction in Europe, the Belgians would have preferred the restoration of Austrian rule, and the return of the Hapsburgs, who represented the House of Burgundy, and the Dukes of Brabant and Counts of Flanders of an earlier epoch. A plebiscite of the Belgian races at any time during the years 1814-15 would have given an overwhelming majority for that restoration, and the pamphlets of the period are full of references to "the glorious days of Maria Theresa." But Austria, after her first hesitation when she sent Baron de Vincent to administer her former provinces, was not willing to recover the Netherlands. She timidly withdrew from the arena, and then the Belgians, having no other alternative in their minds, rallied to the proposed union with Holland under the Orange dynasty.

They were willing to be united with Holland, but not to be absorbed by her. They expected their own laws, privileges, and customs to remain intact. They were to possess absolute equality. Their idea of the Union from the very first was that it was to be a partnership between brothers, neither of whom was to claim seniority. A perusal of the numerous pamphlets published in 1814-15 on the internal political situation of Belgium will satisfy any student of the high spirit and unabated courage of the Belgians, the people whom the Dutch were rather inclined to regard as a subject race without the right to protest or differ. One fact will reveal the true position at a glance to the reader. All the Belgian publicists assumed that Brussels would be the capital of the new Kingdom. That was not the line of a tame or semi-subjugated people, and the sequel will show how tenaciously they stuck to this point.

Holland was governed by what was called "the fundamental law of the United Provinces." This Constitution had been framed out of the old laws and regulations to meet modern requirements, and had been solemnly proclaimed at Amsterdam on 29th March, 1814, immediately after the expulsion of

the French. Twelve months later it became necessary to adapt and apply this law to Belgium. On 22nd April, 1815, King William appointed a Commission for its revision, and it was arranged that it should hold its meetings at The Hague. The Commission originally consisted of twenty-two members, eleven for each country, but after the Treaty of Vienna was signed on 31st May, 1815, two representatives were added for Luxembourg, which had been assigned to the family of Orange-Nassau. The President of the Commission was to be Hogendorp, who had been called "the liberator of his country," and the majority of his Dutch colleagues had participated in drafting the law itself. The eleven Belgians selected to sit on the Commission were Count de Mérode-Westerloo, Count de Thiennes de Lombise, Count Cæsar de Méan, Count d'Arschot, Chevalier de Coninck d'Outridge, Privy Councillor Holvoet, J. F. Gendebien, Rapsaet, Dubois, O. Leclercq, and Theodore Dotrengé. The two representatives for Luxembourg were Baron d'Anethan and Baron van der Dussen. The secretary of the Commission was Jonas Daniel Meyer, a Dutch Jew, and a jurist of recognised ability.

The Commission held its first meeting on 1st May, 1815, and the different views of the opposing parties at once revealed themselves. Hogendorp proposed that the proceedings should commence with the prayer recited at the opening of the Chambers of the United Provinces—that is to say, with a Protestant prayer. The Chevalier de Coninck, one of the ablest and most moderate of the Belgian representatives, expressed on the part of the Catholic members their very natural repugnance to use this formula. After some discussion the objection was allowed, and the prayer was dispensed with. It was not an auspicious beginning, and it was to be only too symptomatic, unfortunately, of the whole course of Belgian-Dutch relations.*

After this prelude the serious business of the Conference claimed attention. There was the question of the religion to

* In a letter written from Brussels on 8th April, 1815, to Lord Byron, Mr. John Cam Hobhouse (afterwards Lord Broughton), speaking of Belgian sentiment, said that the Belgians regarded the Dutch as "a hateful people," and as "a rival State much weaker than themselves."

be supported by and identified with the State. Was the Church of Rome to be restored to its old paramountcy? Were its representatives to retain their place of privilege in the Legislature as members of the States? Another question of practical moment to the nobility, as well as to the Church, was, Were the estates and possessions confiscated and sold during the French Revolution to be restored to their original owners? On these points the Belgian delegates themselves were not united. The Count de Mérode claimed the restoration of ancient privileges and possessions, but only three of his colleagues supported him to the full extent. As some of their contemporaries* wrote, they wanted to blot out, not merely the French Revolution and the French Empire, but also the Brabant Revolution, which had almost given the Belgians their own independence without anyone's aid. The Belgian dissentients secured for the Dutch, who opposed all these pretensions, a majority, and thus enabled the Conference to make some distinct progress where otherwise all would have been deadlock and confusion.

The law of Holland did not recognise Catholicism; the law of Belgium—that is, the old law of the States—was based on the supremacy of the Church of Rome. The extremists among the Belgians asked the Dutch to restore that supremacy with all the consequences that it must entail, among which not the least would have been the recovery of the Church possessions, which included a great part of the land of the country. When this was seen to be hopeless, a plan of compromise was mooted in a definite proposal by M. Rapsaet to insert a clause in the law requiring the King to conclude a concordat with the Pope. This proposal was curtly rejected by the Dutch delegates, and several of the Belgians refrained from supporting it. But many debates were held before a practical way out of the difficulty was discovered. At last it was agreed to draft the religious clauses (Articles 190 to 196 deal with the question of religion) in terms securing for all creeds equal favour and protection, thus fulfilling the conditions of the London Convention of 20th June, 1814, by which King William had

* See Chapter XIV. of previous volume.

promised England to uphold "liberty of conscience." Liberty of religious opinion was guaranteed to all, and no one was to be molested or interfered with on account of his creed. Moreover, all were to share alike—that is, proportionally—in the sums granted by the State towards the support of religion. With regard to the claim for the restoration of estates and feudal privileges the law was silent. Nothing was done.

Another point of contention was the selection of the capital of the new Kingdom. In the Dutch draft of the law Amsterdam was named, and the opposition of the Belgians to this proposal caused some surprise, and gave rise to several heated debates. As the Belgian delegates were unanimous on this point, it seemed as if no conclusion could be arrived at. The Dutch extolled the advantages of Amsterdam; the Belgians were no less sincere or fervent in their praise of Brussels. At last the compromise was proposed and carried that there should be no specific mention of any capital in the Constitution. The 52nd Article of the Fundamental Law was drafted so as to provide for the simultaneous inauguration of a new Sovereign, on taking his oath to the Constitution, at Amsterdam for the Northern Provinces, and in a town to be selected by the King himself in Belgium for the Southern Provinces.

All these questions closely touched Belgian interests or dignity, and therefore the firmness of their representatives was intelligible. But they were firm also on matters of general principle. The Dutch law provided for a single Chamber, or States General, of fifty-five members, and Hogendorp thought that an arrangement which was considered satisfactory by Holland should suffice for Belgium. But the Belgians insisted on there being two Chambers, and they carried this point. One was to be a House of Peers chosen by the Sovereign from the hereditary nobility, and the other was to be composed of elected deputies. No sooner was this difficulty composed than a far more formidable one presented itself. This question was to decide what was to be the proportion between Dutch and Belgian representatives? The Dutch repudiated the theory of the proportion being established by population. They advanced many reasons for a greater representation being given

to their own country than to Belgium, and M. Hogendorp even reminded his hearers that the Treaty of Vienna had not given Holland to Belgium, but the reverse. Still the Belgians, unabashed, claimed a proportion of three to two in their favour, because they counted three millions to the two of their neighbours. The question had to be referred to the study of a Sub-Commission, and at last two Belgians agreed to vote for a compromise making the representatives of the two countries equal in numbers. The report of the Commission embodying its draft of the Fundamental Law was then presented to the King on 13th July, 1815, less than a month after the battle of Waterloo had relieved the Kingdom of the Netherlands from all external danger.

In order to give greater weight to the new arrangement, and perhaps also with a view to ascertaining what the Belgians really were thinking on the question, the King ordered the publication of the draft Constitution, and in the following address to the nation summoned a popular assembly of Notables to pass judgment upon it before it became law—

The Treaty of Vienna having decreed the formal cession of the Belgian Provinces for the purpose of forming conjointly with the United Provinces of the Netherlands a single kingdom, we at once appointed a special Commission to examine what changes it would be useful or necessary to effect in the Constitution established in Holland. Citizens distinguished by their enlightenment, their patriotism, and their probity have occupied themselves in this important work with a zeal worthy of the highest praise. The project which they have just presented to us contains honourable dispositions for the nobility, assures for all creeds equal protection and favour, and guarantees the admission of all citizens to public employment and office. Yet before proceeding to introduce the new Fundamental Law we desire to have the means of convincing ourselves that our subjects assent to its principal arrangements. . . .

For this purpose Notables shall be assembled from each district in the proportion of one for every two thousand inhabitants. We have ordered that the selection of Notables shall be made impartially from among persons worthiest of the confidence of their fellow-citizens. But in order to make sure that our intentions in this respect have been fulfilled, and that those appointed deserve the honour, we decree that the lists shall be published and exhibited for eight days in the district towns. . . .

These are the measures, Belgians, that we have judged to be the most suitable for the establishment of a pact which is to fix your destinies, and hasten the moment when your Sovereign will be surrounded by a legally formed representative body. Happy to reign over a free, brave, and industrious people, we are confident that we shall find in it that character of loyalty and frankness which has always so eminently distinguished it. All our efforts will tend to cement the foundations of its prosperity and its glory, and the citizens of all classes and all the provinces shall have in us a benevolent and impartial protector of their rights and welfare. We assure in particular to the

Catholic Church its state and its liberties, and we shall not lose sight of the examples of wisdom and moderation that have been left us in this respect by our predecessors, your ancient Sovereigns, whose memory is so justly venerated by you.

The effect of this Proclamation was not at all what the King expected. It aroused criticism and opposition, and not the tacit approval and tame adhesion that the Dutch ruler and his Ministers seemed to assume as inevitable. The announcement that all creeds were to be placed on a footing of equality aroused the indignation of the Catholic hierarchy, and it was upon this clause that the vague dissatisfaction and still vaguer aspirations of the Belgian people concentrated their resentment. The agitation throughout the country reached a sensational degree of manifestation. The King was told in unmistakable terms that Europe had no right to force a free people to make a sacrifice of its conscience, and the Bishops became the leaders of a movement that threatened to make short work of Vienna treaties and London conventions. No one who will examine the almost appalling mass of pamphlets, journals, and published addresses issued during this period can arrive at any other conclusion than that of admitting that the Belgian rising of 1830 would have been anticipated by fifteen years if either Austria or France had extended the least sympathy to the anti-Dutch movement. The Allies stood by their work, and France under Talleyrand refrained from even whispering any word of sympathy. The French Minister, for himself, went so far as to declare that he regarded the aggrandisement of Holland with approbation.

Maurice de Broglie, of the famous French family, and son of the Marshal of that name, was at this time Bishop of Ghent. Although a Frenchman of very pronounced sympathies with his own country, he took the lead in this Belgian movement. His courage was indisputable. He had bearded Napoleon at the height of his power when he deposed Pius VII., and had in consequence passed some time in the very cell which the Man in the Iron Mask had occupied on the Isle of Ste Marguerite. On the fall of the Empire he resumed charge of the Bishopric of Ghent, to which he had been appointed in 1807. Here, during the uncertainties of the year 1814, he revealed



KING WILLIAM I. OF THE NETHERLANDS.

a strong French bias, publicly expressing his hope that the Belgian provinces would be reunited with "the ancient Kingdom of the Fleur-de-lys," a delicate reminder of the sometimes forgotten French origin of the national dynasty of Burgundy. This was the man who put himself at the head of the movement against the proposed new Constitution, and as he enjoyed great popularity, more especially in Flanders, he was a formidable opponent.

Immediately after the nomination of the Notables, which did not take long, the Bishop of Ghent and the other Bishops addressed a remonstrance to the King, which bore the form of "respectful representations," but which was tantamount to a challenge. The writers said that "the state of religion, and the liberty of the Catholic Church in this part of your Kingdom, cannot subsist side by side with one of the articles in the proposed new Constitution, by virtue of which equal protection and favour are accorded to all creeds." They went on to declare that this equality was contrary to the Council of Trent, and they also gave expression to their dissatisfaction at the establishment of liberty of the press, and at the clergy, formerly the first order of the State, being deprived of the right of sitting in the Representative Assembly. The document concluded with these phrases: "We are confident that your Majesty will deign to see in these humble and respectful representations only the sincere desire that you shall always reign in peace over these fine provinces, by a paternal administration and by the effect of a firm and constant union between the priesthood and the executive."

The King made no reply to this remonstrance, beyond publishing the very differently worded address sent him by the revising Commission at the same time as they had handed in their draft of the new law. The Commissioners, desirous of promoting union in the new State, concealed the differences that had disturbed their own conclave, and declared in addressing their Sovereign that "it was not difficult to modify this law in such a manner as to make it common to the two nations united by ties which were only broken for their own misfortune

and that of Europe—ties which they now desire to render indissoluble, for their own interest and that of Europe. We have tried, Sire, to emulate your spirit, and to impress on the Constitution which shall regulate your fine Kingdom that character of justice and benevolence which is to be found in all your actions and sentiments. We have not had the arrogance to claim to foresee everything, or the pretension to regulate everything. We have left something for future experience. We have merely deposited the stones on which your wisdom, illumined by time and other counsels, will erect institutions, now rather indicated than fixed, that will complete the edifice of which we have only traced the dimensions and laid the foundations. . . . One day our grandnephews will recall with pride those memorable days when the Dutch and the Belgians, before they were constituted as the body of a nation, but already united by ties of esteem and fraternity, rivalled under the flag of your valiant son with the bravest on the banks of the Sambre and the fields of Waterloo ; those days on which, worthy to fight under the Nassaus, they acquired the esteem of your allies, some glory and laurels, the proof of the intrepidity with which they will always know how to defend their country, their King, and a social compact concluded under such happy auspices.”

The publication of the address from the Commissioners had no effect on the prevailing agitation. In numerous pamphlets, written in Flemish as well as French, and distributed by the thousand, the King was summoned to “ take an oath to maintain the Catholic Church, to restore the triple order—clergy, nobility, and *tiers-état*—of the old Constitution, and to renounce the impossible amalgam that had been devised for a single law with the United Provinces.” It was also proclaimed far and wide that the mere clause enacting freedom of conscience provided sufficient reason for rejecting the Constitution as a whole. This was an astute move, and many of the Notables, from ignorance or indifference, shaped their action accordingly, and did not trouble to give the Fundamental Law any further consideration. Finally, the Bishop of Ghent issued a pastoral letter “ forbidding all the Notables chosen in his diocese from

adhering to the new Constitution in any way or under any excuse whatever."

The Government might well have regarded this prohibition as an act of rebellion and an incital to disorder. It confined itself to confiscating the pamphlets and proclamations. But at the same time it notified the public of one important fact, the full significance of which was not realised at the moment. The articles relating to religion were declared outside all discussion, because they were enforced by the order of Europe. The Notables were directed to pay no attention to them, because they were not to be voted upon. These injunctions did not prevent the Notables from passing judgment on what was not submitted to them, as well as on what was, but they eventually furnished the means of ignoring their vote, or rather of reversing its nominal significance.

After all this heated controversy the time for voting at last arrived. The Fundamental Law was first submitted to the States General of the United Provinces, in the Sovereign's presence, at The Hague on 8th August, 1815. The Dutch Premier, Count de Hogendorp, declared, with a confidence that the manifestations of Belgian sentiment did not justify, that :

" We dare to flatter ourselves that the proposed law will effect the happy reunion of these countries, formerly united, but long separated, and that our moderation and our condescension on the most important points, and those most at our hearts, which furnish the proof of our sincerity and our tolerance, will bring about the well-being of your Kingdom and your subjects."

In Holland at one sitting, on 19th August, the project was passed unanimously into law. Five days earlier the Belgian Notables, recording their votes in the district capitals, rejected it. The counting of the votes at Brussels showed that of 1,323 Notables who had voted 796 were against the law, and only 527 were for it. A more careful examination of the lists showed that 280 Notables were absent, and had not voted at all, while of the 796 dissentients 126 had given as the reason for their votes the refusal to accept the clauses relating to religion. Some observers thought that the King had shown

undue haste, and that he ought to have temporised, and waited till the excitement had calmed down before letting the Notables vote ; and many historians speak of the unskilful proceedings of the Dutch. But the matter had to be decided, and no real argument has ever been adduced to make it appear probable that by delaying the plebiscite the result would have been different. A vote might have been gained here and there, but the majority would not have been seriously affected.

In face of so palpable a rebuff, it only remained to decide what course to pursue. The King and his Ministers were very conscious of the "condescension," to use their own word, with which they had listened and deferred to Belgian protests and demands, and all the return they had got was the answer by plebiscite that their Constitution was not acceptable. It was necessary to decide quickly what was to be done, and King William cannot be said to have dallied as to the course he intended to pursue. Whether he chose the wisest or the most dignified way out of the difficulty has been much discussed, and even those who agreed with his object sometimes expressed the opinion that he might have attained it in a different and better manner.

As has been stated, 1,323 Notables voted in the proportion of 796 against and 527 for the Constitution. But 280 were absent and had abstained from voting. The King ordered that these abstentions should be regarded as affirmatives ; but had he stopped here— $527 + 280 = 807$ —the majority of 11 would have seemed too small as a national endorsement of the new law. Of the dissentients, 126 had given as the reason for their votes the rejection of the religious clause. This was contrary to the instructions for the voting, and their disqualification would not have seemed a very arbitrary or unnatural proceeding. King William ordered these 126 votes to be deducted from the 796 dissentients, but he did not stop there. By a process of reasoning as difficult to follow as it is to justify, he decided that these 126 cancelled votes were also to be counted as affirmatives. It therefore followed that the number of votes against the Constitution sank from 796 to 670, while those for its adoption rose from 527 to 933

(527 + 280 + 126). On these "cooked" figures the Dutch King declared that the Belgian people had accepted the Fundamental Law of the United Provinces, as modified by the Conference at The Hague. He overlooked the important fact that, while the returns of a plebiscite may be manipulated, the sentiments of the voters remain unaffected, and may even become exacerbated by the attempt to balk and misrepresent them.

It is right to give the text of the Proclamation in which King William announced this decision to his new subjects :

From the moment that we were invested with the royal dignity our foremost wish has been to unite by the same social institutions all the inhabitants of the new Kingdom, and thus to dispel all cause of jealousy or discord. To this end the Fundamental Law, already obligatory for a part of our subjects, had to be modified in the interest of all, and conformably with the views of the Powers whose policy had, under the direction of Divine Providence, established the new order of things. The Commission to which we entrusted this important task was composed of men who by their enlightenment and their patriotism had acquired the esteem of their fellow-citizens. But despite the complete confidence with which they had inspired us we were bound in so important a matter, for the safety of the country, to take steps to ascertain the general opinion of the project which was the fruit of their deliberations. In the Northern Provinces the States General were convoked in double strength. In the Southern Provinces, in default of an assembly that might be considered as legally representing the nation, it appeared natural to adopt the course that was followed not more than a year ago in the United Netherlands, and which aroused no objection. Apart from that example the question was submitted to formal examination, and on the advice of the revising Commission we resolved to assemble in each district a certain number of Notables in proportion to the population.

We could not learn without deep regret that our intentions have been misconceived or badly understood, and that, from causes that ought to grieve every Belgian who is a friend to his country, the measure ordered by us has not had the results that we had every right to expect from it.

About one-sixth of the persons summoned did not assist at the meeting of the Notables, and although their absence may be regarded as a proof of their adhesion to the projected Fundamental Law, it would have been more satisfactory for us if not one of them had neglected the opportunity of frankly recording his vote on such important matters.

Of the 796 Notables who disapproved the project 126 formally declared that their vote was due to the articles on religion—articles which, in conformity with long-existing legislation, as being founded on treaties, and in harmony with the principles that the most religious Sovereigns have introduced into the European system, could not be omitted from the Constitution of the Netherlands without rendering the existence of the monarchy problematical, and without weakening the guarantee of the rights of those very persons whom these stipulations have most alarmed.

If this truth had not been obscured by some men from whom the body of the people would have expected an example of charity and evangelical tolerance, the votes in question would have been joined to those of the 527 Notables who approved of the project.

The States General also communicated their approbation to us in an all the

more remarkable manner because it was given unanimously in a very numerous assembly, and it must be regarded as the clearly expressed opinion of all the inhabitants of the Northern Provinces. And as after this enumeration and comparison of the votes respectively recorded there can be no doubt as to the sentiment and wishes of the great majority of all our subjects, we do not hesitate to fulfil our obligations by formally sanctioning the project which was placed by our instructions before the States General and the Notables, and by declaring as we do by these presents that the provisions contained therein form henceforth the Fundamental Law of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

We shall proceed without delay to the necessary measures for putting this law in force, and we wish in particular by a prompt convocation of the two Chambers to enable the States General to exercise concurrently with us the legislative power. The oath that we will pronounce in their midst has long been graven on our heart. Never have we had, never can we have, other views than to increase the general prosperity, and to protect public and individual liberty and the rights of all and every one of our subjects. Disposed to respect the institutions which guarantee these precious pledges, we expect and require the same respect from all the inhabitants of these countries, and whoever from this time forth permits himself to disturb or to shake, by his acts or writings, the sentiments of submission, attachment, and fidelity that every citizen owes to the Constitution, will have to blame himself for the evil that will result to him from the severe application of the laws for similar offences.

But far from us be the thought that the application of these laws can ever be necessary. This day, which puts an end to all uncertainty, must also put an end to all agitation and dissension. The Belgians will not disregard the benefits that Providence offers them. Very soon the voice of passion will be silent before the calm judgment which is natural to this people, and all will partake of the conviction that the national happiness, the bases of which have just been laid, can only be completed and strengthened by mutual watchfulness, and by entire confidence in the Sovereign to whom they are all equally dear, and who desires to consecrate his life to their prosperity and glory.

The reception given to this Proclamation by the general body of the people was far from overtly hostile. There was no organised opposition outside of the Church, and the new Government was supported by a very considerable army. Even the Belgian regiments were well disposed, and had conceived a high admiration for the King's son and heir, the Prince of Orange, who had led them at Quatre Bras and Waterloo. The heated discussion of the new law and the agitation headed by the Bishop of Ghent revealed the causes of future disunion rather than the imminence of an open strife, for which the Belgians were totally unprepared. The measures promptly taken for the inauguration of the new King, the formation of his Government, and the election of the two Chambers, also attracted much attention, and turned the mind of the public from a close examination of the political conditions under which they were about to pass. Even the defiant Prince de Broglie seemed inclined to temporise, for, when the King

visited Ghent not many days after the publication of his decree, announcing that the new law had come into effect, the Bishop told him in his address of welcome that he felt sure that "His Majesty will never require anything of us that could wound our conscience." This enigmatic sentence was somewhat at variance with the Doctrinal Judgment that he and the other Bishops issued a few days later forbidding their flocks to take the prescribed oaths, but it revealed what was never in doubt, that there were no means at that time of putting an end to the Government established in the name of Europe by the family of Orange-Nassau.

The good citizens of Brussels have at all times loved pageantry, and no Government could expect to be popular with them that did not supply the occasions for public festivities. The "Joyous Entries" of the Middle Ages are now replaced by the formal inaugurations of the new Sovereigns. King William chose for the date of his solemn assumption of regal power in the new Kingdom the 21st September, 1815. Before that date he had selected the members of his first ministry, and Count Hogendorp, as Vice-President of the Council, was the principal person in the Administration. His reputation and popularity invested his acts with great weight, but he was not Premier, because the King had reserved for himself the chief place in and the control of the Government. Of the nine other Ministers forming the Cabinet only one was a Belgian—the Duc d'Ursel, who was placed at the head of the Public Works Department. The King had also nominated or approved the first members of the two Chambers. The Upper Chamber consisted of an unfixed number, between forty and sixty, of members nominated for life. The Lower Chamber was composed of 110 members, nominated for three years by the Provincial Councils. Holland sent fifty-five members to this assembly, and Belgium sent the same number. The members enjoyed an unfettered right to express their opinions, and as the press was declared free, they could feel sure of some report of their remarks reaching the great public; but their practical power was fettered in several directions. They could not amend the measures put before them, however freely they

might speak about them. They could not indict the Ministers whom they blamed.

The inauguration of the King was carried through without any unpleasant incident. The people of Brussels displayed a certain amount of enthusiasm. As a spectacle the procession and the attendant fêtes were a complete success, and the chronicler of the day records that "never did a September sun shine more brilliantly on the fine boulevards laid out under Charles of Lorraine." Two at least of the magnates of the Church expressed contentment with the assurances received from the King, and lent their participation to give the necessary religious character to the ceremonial. Francis de Méan, the last of the Prince-Bishops of Liège, dissented from the dogma of the Bishop of Ghent, and referred the matter to the decision of the Pope, who naturally saw in such an issue cause for deliberation. While he was deliberating, de Méan—no longer Prince-Bishop, but Administrator Apostolic of the district of which Brussels was the centre—took his seat in the Upper Chamber on the King's nomination, and, encouraged by his example, Canon Millé, of the Church of Ste Gudule, agreed to receive the King and to celebrate the *Te Deum* at the inauguration. The King himself had paved the way for these concessions by promising to submit all questions affecting the Catholic Church to a Commission of the Council composed of Catholics alone.

The ceremony of inauguration was divided into three parts. The first was held in the famous Hôtel de Ville, where, in the presence of the two Chambers, the King, wearing the cloak of the ancient Dukes of Brabant, took the first part of the oath, and addressed the members of the legislature in a speech delivered in Dutch, calling on them to second his efforts towards union. The second part of the ceremony was accomplished on the Place Royale, where special stands had been erected. It was here, before the assembled people, that King William took the oath prescribed by the Fundamental Law :

I swear to the people of the Netherlands to maintain and observe the Fundamental Law of the Kingdom, and on no occasion and under no pretext whatever shall I depart from it, or suffer it to be set aside. I swear, moreover, to defend and preserve with all my power the independence of the Kingdom

and the integrity of its territory, as also public and private liberty, to maintain the rights of all and each of my subjects, and to employ for the preservation and increase of the general and individual prosperity all the means, as becomes a good King, that the laws place at my disposal. So God be my aid !

The third and concluding part of the day's proceedings took place at Ste Gudule. Canon Millé received the King at the main or western door, and having delivered an address, in which he declared that " the Constitution was of a character to satisfy the most scrupulous Catholic," he preceded him to the altar, where the *Te Deum* Mass was celebrated. For this subservience the acting Bishop Apostolic of Malines threatened to unfrock the Canon of Ste Gudule, but nothing could undo the fact that the inauguration of the King of the Netherlands in the Belgian capital had been carried out to the last detail just as if he had been the best of Catholics. All the circumstances of the inauguration of the new King and the establishment of the first Dutch Government seemed to supply a corrective for the clerical agitation on the Conscience Clause, and to provide ground for hope that the new Kingdom might become consolidated.

But the emotions of the hour died down, and the radical causes of dissension and strife remained. The Doctrinal Judgment of the Bishops had forbidden their congregations to take the prescribed oaths. This meant that those who accepted nomination to either Chamber put themselves outside the pale of the Church. The language of this manifesto of the 19th century was the same as that employed in the 16th. It bore the signature of De Broglie, but the reader might expect to find that of Granvelle, or even Loyola. The main argument read as follows :

To swear to maintain the liberty of religious opinion, and equal protection for all creeds, is that anything else than to maintain and protect error against truth ? To swear to maintain observance of a law which renders all the King's subjects, of whatever religious belief, eligible to hold any dignity and any office, that would be to justify in advance and to sanction the measures that might be taken to confide the interests of our holy religion, in these strongly Catholic provinces, to Protestant officials. To swear to observe and maintain a law which puts in the hands of the Government the power to order the cessation of the practice of the Catholic religion, whenever it occasions trouble, is not that to make the practice of our holy religion depend on the will of its enemies and the malice of the wicked ? To swear to observe a law which supposes that the Catholic Church is subject to the laws of the State is clearly to render oneself liable to co-operate in the overthrow of the Church. All these laws are such as a true Catholic should regard with horror.

The framers of this Judgment had evidently forgotten that during the twenty years of French rule that had just terminated religious tolerance, or rather indifference, had prevailed. But although they might be illogical, they were not irresolute, and they availed themselves of the first occasion to show that they were fully prepared to carry out their threats. A Deputy M. de Wargny of Malines, feeling his last hour approaching, sent for a priest to give him absolution. The priest came, but refused to perform his office unless the dying man retracted his oath to observe the Fundamental Law, which had been declared by the Church contrary to religion. M. de Wargny assented, and made a formal retraction before two Notaries. To give the act more notoriety, he at the same time devised the amount of all the fees he had received from the State—some 7,000 francs—to the poor. Then, and only then, did the priest grant him the absolution desired. The affair, described at full length in the clerical journals, and circulated to the four corners of the Kingdom, made a great sensation. It was a triumph for the Church over the State, and many persons of various ranks who had taken the oath for the purpose of holding office threw up their appointments. People began to talk of an epidemic of troubled consciences, which would leave the administration unmanned.

The Bishops did not confine their attack to the taking of the oath. The early measures of the new Government necessarily included schemes of education. For higher education three Universities were founded at Louvain, Liège, and Ghent. The course was to be free, and no restraint was placed on the professors and teachers to follow any prescribed line of instruction. No sooner was this fact known than the Bishops entered a protest against this systematised dissemination of pernicious doctrines. They professed their astonishment at no effort being made to enforce the dogmas and maxims of the Catholic religion. They claimed a right to appoint revisers in the colleges, who should see not merely that the religious teaching was orthodox, but also that no books were used which were of an irreligious or unorthodox tendency. The differences between the Government and the Church covered,

therefore, a wide range, and it was clear that no solution could be found without one side or the other meeting with discomfiture.

Reference has been made to the fact that when the Prince de Méan took the oath he said it was a matter that the Pope should decide between him and the Bishop of Ghent. At first it seemed as if this decision would go against him, for the Pope sent the Bishop of Ghent a letter approving of everything he had done. But the Prince de Méan was a skilful debater, and parried the blow by a public notification that, in taking the oath on entering the first Chamber, he had bound himself to nothing contrary to the dogmas and laws of the holy Roman Church, and nothing should ever induce him to act in that sense. None the less, he did not repudiate his oath, and he retained his seat in the Upper Chamber. It was the first success the Government had scored, and many good Catholics consented to take the oath in the same sense as M. de Méan had done. But the full importance of his support only became evident when the Pope sent the Prince de Méan his canonical blessing as Archbishop of Malines.

Up to this point the Government had taken no repressive measures. It had been the mark of open attack and virulent abuse, but it had confined itself to general observations that the law was to be upheld. Its stoical attitude became somewhat modified when it found that the whole machinery of the administration looked like going awry. Once it admitted that mere passivity would not suffice, it was not surprising that the pointed arrows of some of its literary critics should have irritated it into action. The *Spectateur Belge* was the organ of the clerical party. Its editor was a young priest of Bruges named De Foere, and it had published not merely all the documents bearing the official seal of the Bishop of Ghent, but many denunciations of the Government on its own account. The King decided that a first example should be made of this paper and its editor.

The specific charge made was that of spreading mistrust and promoting disunion between the races of the Netherlands, and it will not be disputed that the Government had ample material

upon which to base such an indictment. Short of absolute incitement to open rebellion, the assailants of the new administration did not qualify their exhortations to the people to show it disobedience and occasion it embarrassment. On 9th February, 1817, as he was leaving his church at Bruges, Abbé De Foere was arrested and conveyed to Brussels for trial. The case was heard during two days, and the judges of the special court entrusted with the trial sentenced De Foere to two years' imprisonment for attacks on the King and the Constitution. The publisher of the journal was fined, and a sentence of three months' imprisonment, accompanied by a fine, was passed on the editor of another journal who expressed his sympathy with De Foere by making a bitter attack on his judges.

The Government had also decided to proceed to extremities with its arch-enemy, Maurice de Broglie, Bishop of Ghent. Even before the arrest of the editor of the *Spectateur Belge* it had instituted the preliminaries for legal action against the prelate. He had been called upon to give an explanation of his Doctrinal Judgment, and he had replied that he recognised no judge of his actions save the Pope. Encouraged by the result of the De Foere trial, the Government decided to arrest the Bishop of Ghent, and to bring him to trial before the same Brussels tribunal. The Bishop, however, got timely warning, and made his escape to France. His trial was carried on in his absence, and, despite his written protests, he was duly sentenced to removal from his diocese and banishment from the country. The Government did not stop there. They caused the written sentence to be exposed on a scaffold at Ghent on which two common malefactors were at the time being publicly branded. This inexcusable outrage raised a storm of indignation that the trials themselves had failed to create.

After his flight the Bishop of Ghent continued the contest by pamphlets and intrigues, which ended only with his death. His agitated and varied career closed at Paris in July, 1821, and it must be recorded as some evidence of his energy and influence that after his death King William's Government

breathed more freely. They had, indeed, good reason to do so. During the interval of four years between his banishment and death the vicars and clergy of Ghent appointed to carry on the work of the diocese refused to recognise any authority than that of the Prince de Broglie, or even to take the oath to the established Government. The situation changed at once on the Bishop's death. The clergy thereupon took the oath to the Governor of the Province, and calm at last settled down on the long-agitated Diocese of Ghent. This act did not stand by itself. It was rather the last of a series of incidents following the trials and expulsions of 1817.

A sort of religious truce had thus fallen on the land. No one could say how genuine it was, or whether the sharp ebullition of religious feeling and hostility on the part of the leaders of the Church was not to prove the precursor of deeper and more formidable resentment on the part of their flock and followers, the peoples of Belgium. A fact deserves specific mention. In one of the treatises to which the Bishop of Ghent put his name the fear was expressed that, owing to the influence of the Dutch Government, the Church would lose many of its followers, who might lapse to Protestantism. This fear was groundless. There is no record of any single case of conversion. As has been already said, the Belgians chose their religious path in the 16th century, and there has been no leaning to any other creed than that of the Church of Rome ever since. Where there has been defection it has been towards disbelief.

In considering the brief course of Dutch rule in Belgium, which did not cover altogether a longer period than fifteen years, it has been necessary to describe in some detail, and without prejudice or passion, the religious differences that revealed themselves on the accession of the House of Orange-Nassau to the newly created throne of the combined Netherlands. The question can be more easily and calmly discussed because it was really a dispute about authority, and not about dogma. No one thought that the Dutch Protestants wanted to convert the Belgian Catholics. The protests of the Bishops were directed against the innovation, which was not originally

Dutch, but European, that all creeds were to enjoy equality in the new State. The downfall of the Napoleonic system signified in their minds the restoration of the old régime, but as the world had not stood still, it did not possess this significance. The Dutch had to give up their exclusive system of holding no communion with Rome, and of not allowing its agents or churches within their Empire; the Belgians had to accept and recognise a Protestant Government. The change could not be effected without some friction and some manifestations of temper. The quick French temperament of the Bishop of Ghent carried him to far greater lengths of opposition than his Flemish followers, although his high position in the Church gave him the right and the opportunities of posing as their leader. But the mass of the Belgian race were disposed to give the new system a trial. Some historians think that King William made a mistake in taking any notice of the opposition of the Bishop of Ghent and his fellow-Bishops. It would have been better, they say, to go on ruling without paying regard to the Doctrinal Judgment and other effusions; but intentional cecity as a policy finds a place more easily on the page of the critic than in the acts of a Government.

With the lapse of time, as the two races come into closer contact, as the task of fusing them into a nation becomes more intricate, other differences, other incompatibilities, will reveal themselves. These will not admit of the direct and certain remedy applied to the authors of the Doctrinal Judgment. An individual—even a Prince of the Church—can be banished; not so a whole community. The Government and the nation have to settle their differences at home, and as well as they can. But the religious question was the first to show itself on the surface, and the warmth and passion with which deep-rooted prejudices and the hope of the reactionaries to see revived the old régime with all its ancient privileges invested the manifestation, led many to think that it was to prove the cause of an immediate disruption of the Netherlands. The occurrences of less than two years sufficed to correct this opinion. The foreign Government triumphed, the religious excitement cooled down, and even the leaders of the Church seemed to think that

a system which left their ascendancy over the people unaffected might prove as good a specimen of secular government as they were likely to obtain from any quarter.

The more serious consequences of the sharp quarrel between the Church and the State are to be found in the impression it left on the mind of King William himself and in the influence it permanently exercised upon the policy of his Government. That Government had been established in the teeth of an adverse decision by the peoples of Belgium on the merit and the suitability to them of the new Constitution. The Dutch King set aside their veto by a trick. When he encountered the opposition of the Bishops, he enforced his own law by bringing his chief opponents before courts of whose loyalty to himself he had made sure, and by seeing them pass into prison or exile. Finally he had emphasised his triumph by subjecting his principal adversary to insult and outrage. So far as the immediate matter at issue went there was no untoward consequence. Neither noisy meetings nor riots disturbed the calm of the country. It was proclaimed on account of this calm that the mass of the Belgians were contented ; in the same breath was expressed the more comforting assurance for an alien ruler that they were incapable of insurrection. When other difficulties arose, these convictions warped the judgment of the ruler and his advisers, and led them to conclude that a whole nation could be coerced with the same success as had attended the measures taken against the Bishop of Ghent and his clergy.

CHAPTER II.

The Course of Dutch Rule.

THERE has never been any doubt that King William wished to make the Netherlands a Power in Europe. He had definite aims and a far from small ambition. The addition of Belgium and Luxembourg to his realm did not satisfy him. His favourite project was the prolongation of his State to as far as Switzerland, so that it might form a strong and durable buffer between France and Germany. On this point the correspondence of the Dutch Minister Falck, who was opposed to the gratification of the King's ambition in this matter, is instructive. In a letter dated 23rd February, 1815, he wrote: "The wisdom of the Congress opposed the ambition of the King to go as far as the Rhine. We have a fair stretch on the right bank of the Meuse, with all the Bishopric of Liége. . . ." On the other hand, the King, to support his policy, kept on foot a standing army of nearly 100,000 men, among whom was a Swiss contingent, 6,000 strong.

The European Powers did not entertain the scheme, and England was far from wishing to see the France of the Bourbons weakened. King William had to be satisfied with what the Vienna Congress gave him, and very soon it became clear that he had got as much as he could manage. His own difficulties, quite apart from his conflict with the Bishops, soon required all his attention, and some of these were undoubtedly of his own making. He had been very firm, and even peremptory, in passing the Fundamental Law, but he soon showed that he had not realised that his own law prescribed constitutional government. It is true that some indication of his views had been furnished while the measure was still before the

Commission, by his vetoing the clause that proposed to establish Ministerial responsibility. On that occasion someone who knew him well composed the epigram, "This King is too much of a Liberal to be a King, and too much of a King to be a Liberal!" Throughout his reign the impulses of the man and the desires of the autocrat were struggling for the mastery, and in consequence his policy was sometimes arbitrary, and still more often unintelligible. But there is no reason for denying him the possession of good intentions and a high ideal. Perhaps his motives were inspired rather by pride of race than by affection for his Belgian subjects; but that he honestly desired to place the Orange dynasty on a level with the Bourbons or the Hohenzollerns is beyond question.

Nor is it possible to overlook the fact that King William was one of the most excellent of men, blameless in his life, thinking of nothing save the duties of his high position, and with a tenderness of heart that the inflexibility of his policy could not conceal. A single incident will reveal the truth of this. He made it his practice, whilst resident in Brussels, to set apart one day a week for public audiences. There was no ceremonial; entrance was free to all. The petitioners were received by the King, who sat at a large table and listened to their complaints, troubles, and requests. Many of these visitors came on the most trivial excuse, but to one and all King William gave patient hearing. He also walked about the streets unattended, and it was a favourite practice with him to sit in the public gardens reading a book or listening to the music. There was nothing in his mode of life to suggest that there remained difficult matters for arrangement between the two races of the Netherlands. He was also supported by his wife, Queen Wilhelmina, a Princess of the House of Prussia,* who devoted her time to charitable deeds. It was not their fault if they failed to become popular among the Belgians, and, in truth, any holding aloof by the Belgian public was caused not by personal but political considerations.

* Frederica Wilhelmina Louisa, daughter of Frederick William II. of Prussia. King William and his wife were first cousins, his mother being Sophia Wilhelmina, sister of the King named.

The King's eldest son, the Prince of Orange, had been almost engaged in the year 1814 to marry the Princess Charlotte of England, only child of the Prince Regent. It is unnecessary to go into the details of the circumstances and causes that led to the match being broken off. On 2nd May, 1816, the Princess Charlotte married Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, and she died in the following year—5th November, 1817—to the deep regret of the British nation. After the battle of Waterloo the desirability of marrying the heir-apparent to the Netherlands throne again became a question of the hour, and the visit of the Emperor Alexander of Russia to Brussels in September, 1815, was signalled by the formal betrothal of his sister, the Grand Duchess Anne Paulovna, to the Prince of Orange. Their marriage was celebrated at St. Petersburg on 1st February, 1816, and one of the first acts of the new Legislative Chambers was to present the Prince with a palace in Brussels and the old royal domain and château of Tervueren, seven or eight miles north-east of that city. The Prince of Orange's palace is the present Palais des Académies, adjoining the square in front of the King's palace.

The sympathies of the Prince of Orange with the Belgians were far greater than those of his father, who was a typical Dutchman of the old school. On the other hand, the young Prince had been brought up in England, and had served with distinction on the Duke of Wellington's staff in Spain. His relations with the Duke, for whom he had an intense admiration, were those of cordial and affectionate friendship. It was to him that he appealed whenever he felt in doubt on public questions. Taking broader views of public questions than his father, he regarded the signs of Belgian disaffection with lively apprehension, and he did not attempt to minimise its importance. When the Chambers presented him with the palace mentioned, he earnestly desired to procure his father's permission to reside during the greater part of the year in Brussels, and not to be compelled to follow the movements of the Court backwards and forwards to The Hague. He wrote as follows to the Duke of Wellington on the subject :



PRINCE LEOPOLD AND THE PRINCESS CHARLOTTE.

ST. PETERSBURG,
3rd April, 1816.

The spirit of the Belgians becoming daily worse and more dissatisfied on account of the entire influence of the Dutch, who have all the business in hand, and consider Belgium daily more as an annexed province which is to be submissive to the Mother Country, it seems to me of great importance to check this bad spirit as much as possible.

The King is exclusively surrounded by Dutch, who, although his intentions are the fairest and the best, lead him to be decidedly partial in favour of the Dutch, and, this being the case, he is made to be quite averse to my being, on my return from this, settled for the greatest part of each year at Brussels, which is the general wish of the Belgians, and might be very useful, for you know how easily that nation is gained and amused by a Court, and when amused they forget to a great degree their grievances, which at present is the only thing to try, since I can apply no radical cure, my reflections and remarks being never attended to, or, when attended to, they are ill interpreted by the Dutch that influence the King.

The Duke of Wellington, however, did not think that it was proper for him to interfere in any way in an internal question, and he declined the Prince's request, at the same time hazarding the opinion that there were no signs "of dissatisfaction among the Belgians." Events showed that the young Prince was better able to scent coming danger than his elders. Had he only displayed as much activity and energy as his father, he might have averted a catastrophe; but he was easy-going and good-natured. Having uttered his warning, he stood aside, leaving events to take their course, until at last, after fourteen years' seclusion, he was summoned to deal with a crisis when it was too late to discover a satisfactory solution. Before leaving the subject of the Prince, to return to the constitutional and other difficulties of his father, it may be mentioned that a son was born to him at Brussels on 19th February, 1817, and received the title of Duke of Brabant. This infant became in course of time William III. of the Netherlands, and the father of the present reigning Queen Wilhelmina.

Before leaving the subject of the Prince of Orange, reference may be made to the intrigues of French Bonapartist exiles at Brussels, in which he was alleged to have taken some part. Much of the story is still obscure, and here it may be briefly told. Although the Bourbons had recovered the throne of France, they quite failed to attract any popular sympathy. The army in particular remained absolutely Napoleonic.

There was, therefore, every inducement to intrigue, and the only point was the exact form it would take. Napoleon was in St. Helena, his son was a child, and the little colony of French Generals in the Belgian capital fixed on the Prince of Orange. The proposal was to annex France to the Netherlands! It is difficult to believe that anyone could have seriously entertained such a project, but the Prince of Orange undoubtedly listened to its proposers. It was even thought that the Russian troops in France might co-operate in the plot. The Russian commander refused, and informed his Sovereign. The Czar admonished his brother-in-law to abandon the mad scheme, while Wellington advised King William of what was going on, with the result that His Majesty removed the Prince of Orange temporarily from the command of the Netherlands army. It was a curious episode, chiefly calling for notice here because it furnishes a refutation of the characteristically English opinion concerning all Belgian questions—viz., that they are necessarily small and insignificant. At Brussels the King wanted to found a new State equal to Prussia or France, and his son aspired for a brief moment to the throne of France. Yet it would not be strictly true to say that the House of Orange was in these matters suffering from megalomania. The Netherlands contained a larger population and far greater resources than the Brandenburg, which a century earlier had become Prussia.

King William having succeeded in carrying his view, that, despite the Constitution, he was to be ruler in fact as well as in name, was not long in discovering opportunities of showing that he really meant what he said. It was not merely the Belgians, but his own Dutch Ministers, who were to feel that he was their master. Hogendorp had been called the liberator of Holland. He had turned out the French and called back the Orange family. He had established the Fundamental Law, and he had shown himself the King's ablest coadjutor. On the other hand, he carried himself rather haughtily, and he was overfond of referring to his friendship with George Washington. The prominence, the notoriety, of Hogendorp somewhat detracted from the dignity of a King who wished

to be the sole ruler of his country. But if Hogendorp was trying to his Sovereign, he was quite intolerable to his associates. His colleagues in the State Council loudly complained of his dictatorial manners, and the King, for his own ends, was only too willing to fall in with their views. Hogendorp was too proud to accommodate himself to the changed situation. When the King refused his permission to the printing of a memorandum that he had drawn up on the state of the Kingdom, Hogendorp resigned his offices, and nothing would induce him to return. He retained his seat in the Lower Chamber, where he made himself conspicuous as an unfriendly critic of the Government. The King sought to remove his opposition by nominating him to the Upper House, but Hogendorp was not to be silenced. He rejected the honour, and from that moment their relations became those of open hostility. When Hogendorp, in 1819, opposed the fixing of the Budget for ten years in advance, the King's resentment at his opposition reached its height, and he summarily deprived him of the title and privileges of Minister of State.

In the place of Hogendorp came Falck, who, by his caustic and unceasing criticism in the Council, had rendered the position of the elder Minister uncomfortable, and eventually untenable. Intellectually superior to his predecessor, Falck posed as the friend of literature and the patron of the arts. He took a prominent part as Secretary of State in the revival of the Academy which had been founded by the Empress Maria Theresa. In its new form it was to be specifically known as "The Royal Academy of Sciences and Belles Lettres." Falck himself was elected one of its honorary members not long after its coming into existence, and as some expression of general sympathy for his loss of the King's favour when his turn came to incur royal displeasure. Falck also took a prominent part in the rearrangement of the Belgian art treasures, which had undergone a period of captivity in France. The celebrated Burgundy Library was restored to the Brussels Museum. The masterpieces of Rubens were replaced in the churches of Antwerp and other cities. Falck, as head of the Government, however, was no more inclined than his pre-

decessor to be a cipher. He asserted his independence, and the King declared that he would not blindly obey orders, which was true. Falck was, consequently, removed from the State Secretaryship, to become Minister of Public Instruction. In his place the King put De Mey de Streefkerk, an old official without any ideas of his own, but a hard worker, and one who only thought of executing the wishes of his Sovereign. This was his great merit in the eyes of King William, of whom Wellington truly said that "once he forms an opinion, he cannot be shaken in it."

The members of the first Chamber, it will be remembered, were selected and nominated by the King himself; but in 1817* the period had arrived for the first election, which by the law was only held for one half of the members. The King ostentatiously disclaimed all intention of interfering with the free exercise of the suffrage, but he made full use of his freedom in commenting on and criticising the individuals elected when they were either personally distasteful to him, or men from whom he anticipated opposition. For instance, he designated M. Hennequin after his election for Maestricht as a "goupillon"—a mere holder of holy water in the interests of the Church. With regard to other representatives of a well-known Liberal tendency, he openly expressed his fear that they were entirely French in their sympathies.

At this stage of the question, when there was no reason for asserting positively that the new Kingdom could not continue to exist, it may not be out of place to quote the opinion of a well-known observer,† writing at the time on the subject. His views were distinctly optimistic, but in so far as they proved erroneous and misleading the reader must remember that at the time when M. Constant put them on paper the Dutch Government had committed no overt act of injustice to the

* It may be mentioned that in this year the Netherlands fleet, under Admiral Van Capellen, took an honourable part in Lord Exmouth's bombardment of Algiers. Capellen received the Order of the Bath, the thanks of the House of Commons, and a sword of honour. In 1818 the Netherlands troops were withdrawn from Picardy, receiving the thanks of the French population for their good conduct.

† Benjamin Constant de Rebecque, then resident in Paris. His father had been a Colonel in the Dutch army, and he was himself something of a Cosmopolitan.

Belgian half of the nation. There were differences of religion, of principle, and of opinion. The King was arbitrary in his relations with his Ministers, but they were Dutchmen. Towards the Belgians all his words and most of his deeds had been conciliatory. His conflict with the Bishops had been a struggle pregnant with future consequences, but for the moment not unhinging the arrangements carried out under several international compacts. Moreover, religious disputes had no influence on the opinions expressed in the following passages by Benjamin Constant :*

The different characters of the Dutch and the Belgians should have sufficed to reveal the obstacles that made it impossible for the amalgamation of the two peoples to be either easy or rapid. Their interests are still opposed to each other, their habits are not in accord. Both are commercial, but the former carry on a trade of transport, while the latter are engaged in production, and the measures favouring the one disturb the immediate calculations, and especially the prejudices, of the other. Dutch speculations are principally connected with England, where the richest Dutch capitalists had fixed their residence during the Bonapartist period. Belgian enterprises for the greater part depend on manufactures which originated or remarkably developed during the union of France and Belgium, and her manufacturers see with regret communications reopened with England.

Holland has contracted a considerable debt; Belgium complains of having to share the burden. Belgian Deputies have not in the Representative Assemblies the influence to which they think they have a right. Their number does not seem to them to be in proportion to the population and importance of the Provinces. The distribution of the executive posts appears to them still less equitable. Only a little while ago out of eight Ministers one alone was a Belgian, out of twenty-eight officials in the Diplomatic Service only one Belgian, etc., etc. In the army, of thirty-two lieutenant-generals six were Belgians, and of fifty-three major-generals only ten. Altogether among those holding the foremost offices of any kind in the Kingdom there were only thirty Belgians as against 139 Dutchmen.

Independently of this material inequality the Belgians who take part in the Government encounter in their colleagues from Holland more knowledge in the conduct of business, greater practice in the forms established from time immemorial, and that persistence, that invincible tenacity, which results from the exercise of authority, and which assures to those who possess it a supremacy that time can only gradually destroy.

Another difference established between these two peoples a more insurmountable barrier. Deprived of a national idiom, the Belgians have long adopted French, which they almost all speak with ease.† The obligation to

* "Tableau politique du royaume des Pays Bas," par Benjamin Constant.

† This is an inaccuracy. Half the Belgian nation, the Flemings, at all times spoke Flemish, and of these not 10 per cent. in 1817 understood a word of French. Flemish is almost the same language as Dutch, and this similarity provided the one link between the two races. It may also be mentioned that by the Fundamental Law no national language was prescribed. French, Dutch, or Flemish was facultative in the Chambers or the Courts. During the session of 1821 a Dutch member called Dutch "the national language," whereupon the Belgian members rose, loudly protesting against the pretension.

learn another tongue, which is useless outside the debates of the Assemblies and the pleadings in the courts, appears to them insupportable, and even humiliating.

Finally, although divided into several provinces, the Belgians had a capital not by law, but in fact. When subject to a distant monarchy they still possessed a Court, and Brussels was a centre of society, luxury, and political activity. The Hague does not possess the same claims in their eyes. Everything depends, then, in Belgium (leaving aside European events which may affect it) on the proceedings of the Government. It will strengthen itself by liberty; it will strengthen itself by it alone.

The year 1821 may be said to mark the turning-point in the relations between the Dutch and the Belgians. Up to that stage in the question the differences between them had not entered upon an acute phase. There had been much talking and writing that might be classed under the head of polemics, but the acts of the Government had not become openly aggressive and hostile. The King could still employ his favourite phrase of being "the father of his people" without incurring the suspicion of mockery. In other words, "the intimate and complete fusion" of the two races prescribed by the London Convention of 21st July, 1814, seemed still to be within the scope of practical realisation.

The whole situation was changed by the acts of the Dutch Government. It may be admitted that these acts were not influenced solely by inability to appreciate the situation in Belgium, or by indifference to Belgian opinion. They were produced by the very necessities of the Government itself. Holland before the Union had been burdened with a heavy debt, the expenses of the 1815 campaign had added to it, and the subsequent years had been lean ones for the national revenue. In addition to these causes there had been costly campaigns and expeditions in Java and the Eastern Archipelago. The usual surplus from the Dutch Indies had been turned into a deficit from which there was no escape. For these circumstances the Dutch were in no way blameworthy. They were the facts more or less inseparable from the transitional period through which the State was passing.

On the other hand, the Dutch may be justly censured for

In the Upper Chamber French was invariably employed. King William, in opening the session, however, always spoke in Dutch. As will be seen later on, the attempt to force the Dutch language on the Belgians was one of the causes of the revolution of 1830.

too quickly and too dictatorially forcing on the Belgians half, and in some respects the greater half, of the financial burden arising out of these responsibilities with which they had had nothing to do. When King William was inaugurated, Belgium was free from a public debt. She had suffered much by war and invasion, yet she had escaped that permanent incubus. Belgium had no colonies. The argosies of Java and Malacca were for Amsterdam, not Antwerp. Why should Belgium be called upon to bear half the weight of a debt in making which she had had no part, or of the cost of colonies out of which she had derived no profit? At least no one could expect them to hail such an infliction as a benefit. Time, tact, and persuasion were essential to gain their acquiescence. Their King and his nominees did not condescend to argue or explain. They insisted, and they gave orders. The Belgians for a time could only obey. But no one can doubt, on examining all the public documents, that the fiscal measures forced on Belgium in 1821 were the primary cause of the downfall of Dutch rule in that country.

Reference has been made to the financial difficulties of the Government, which might be pleaded in mitigation of its policy, but to complete the picture it is necessary to add that there was considerable scarcity and distress throughout Belgium. Petitions had been frequently presented to the King calling attention to the dearness of food. Wheat had risen by 50 per cent., and potatoes by over 300 per cent. as compared with the prices current during the French occupation. Belgian opinion was consequently in an extremely sensitive state in regard to any measures that seemed likely to affect the price of the food supplies of the nation. The Dutch proposals, it will be seen, were of that character.

Having carried during the session of 1819 the decennial Budget which secured for the Government a free hand for that long period ahead, there remained next to provide the financial resources that would enable the anticipations set forth in the Bill to be realised. It was largely due to the aid of Belgian Deputies that this project had been carried into law. Several Dutch representatives were strongly opposed

to it, and had the Belgians been more experienced in Parliamentary warfare, or if they had realised what was to follow, they would, by standing solid, have defeated the proposal to give the Government supplies for ten years in advance. But although several able and brilliant speakers had entered the Chamber and added to the distinction of the Belgian Parliamentary party, they did not see through the manœuvre, and voted all that the King required. Hogendorp was no sympathiser with the Belgians, but he opposed the measure because he foresaw that it would enable the King to dispense with his Parliament for a long period. The Belgian members, not possessing his experience, supported the project, and hoped by so doing to secure the royal sympathy for the grievances of their own people. They were destined to be disappointed.

In October, 1820, the *projet de loi*, or draft Bill, for the new system of taxation was placed before the Chamber. Its three principal propositions were, first, a maximum import duty of 6 per cent. on foreign productions of any kind ; second, an internal tax called *la mouture* on the grain and corn brought into towns ; and, thirdly, the further tax, called *l'abatage*, on the meat sold by butchers in addition to the octroi duty levied on the living animals at the town barriers. The announcement of the proposed taxes caused dismay throughout Belgium. If the imposition of the new duties on food gave rise to discontent and resentment, it may be doubted whether the fixing of the import duties at a low rate did not produce wider dissatisfaction and more gloomy apprehensions. For Belgium was already a manufacturing country. Its mines were being worked to considerable advantage, and all the Belgians asked for was the protection of their industries against foreign competition. Instead of Protection, the Dutch Government fixed the import duties at such a low figure that the English manufacturer would have no difficulty in competing with the Belgian in the home market. The projected law was openly denounced as another pro-English measure of the House of Orange.

The financial proposals were taken in two parts, and priority

was given to the discussion of the import duty. When the debate began there was no longer any possibility of denying the warmth and volume of Belgian opinion as expressed by its constituted representatives. The policy they demanded was to be one frankly of Protection, and they claimed, not an import duty of 6 per cent., but one that should be absolutely prohibitive. The Government proposal, it was declared, would be "simply disastrous to the Belgians," and if it was persisted in "the Dutch would be guilty of a moral fratricide." Many fine speeches were made against it, and the Dutch members said little in support of the measure. The speech of the Deputy Reyphins in particular was a fine piece of oratory on behalf of Protection for the national mines, workmen, and productions, and his protest against allowing English competition to overcome home production undoubtedly voiced public opinion and described in anticipation the policy that has subsequently governed independent Belgium.

Another brilliant speech was that made by the Deputy Dotrengé. His theme was the marked indifference of the Dutch members to the strong views expressed by Belgians on matters that affected Belgium alone, and their determination to trample on their views and interests by a merely nominal majority of votes. "The struggle," he said in his peroration, "that has revealed itself throughout this discussion between the pretensions of the North and those of the South, the determination to carry the day, by no matter how small or fallacious a majority, reveals to us clearly that there exists in this assembly a very distinct cleavage, and that is the most deplorable fact of all. Discussions in the Cabinet may not be of very great consequence, but persistent and serious causes of civil dissension are the greatest ills that can afflict a State. Decide now, fellow-citizens of the North, and if you have fully determined on this step, complete to-night the fratricide of old and loyal Belgium."

It was on this occasion that Hogendorp, whose quarrel with the King had not diminished his intense Dutch sentiments, exclaimed: "If Belgian Députés exclaim, 'We do not wish to have you here,' we may reply, 'We do not need

you.' " When the Bill came to the vote fifty-five were for it, and fifty-one against. Three Belgians were absent, and one voted for the measure. The latter filled the gap created by the absence of one Dutch Deputy. In the Upper House the measure was passed by twenty-one votes to seventeen. The moral victory rested in a double sense with the Belgian opposition. The Dutch majority for the most part preserved silence. From the ranks of the Ministers came not a single speech worthy of notice. On the other side a remarkable power of eloquence was displayed by more than one Belgian representative. The pent-up feelings of an ignored and incensed people were finding expression against the oppression of a dull and narrow-minded clique of officials. The officials were faithful imitators of their Sovereign. When King William read the names of those Deputies who had voted against his measure he summarily dismissed those among them who held office in his household or the public administration. No act could better show the prejudice that biassed his judgment or the obstinacy with which he resolved that his views should prevail.

It was not merely in the Chamber that the indignation and self-confidence of the Belgian people were becoming visible. Even before the voting on the fiscal question the King had shown himself intolerant of opposition and of criticism. Freedom of the press was one of the promises of the Fundamental Law, but it had been largely qualified and rendered of little practical value by enactments forbidding any criticism of the established order of things because it would conduce to disunion. At the end of 1819 M. Vanderstraeten published a pamphlet severely criticising and blaming the Government, but praising the King personally, and attributing to him the possession of good intentions. The praise, which was rather overdone, was considered a mere blind intended to save the writer from the penalty of the law. The criticism and censure remained. It expressed public sentiments with admirable vigour and directness, thus increasing its force, and at the same time it pierced the adamant self-satisfaction of the Dutch bureaucrats. Vanderstraeten was arrested, and placed

in solitary confinement. When he claimed the right to be represented by counsel, his request was rejected. When six of the leaders of the Belgian Bar came forward to offer their services for his defence, they were thrown into prison. It is true that the Government quickly realised that in this they had gone too far, and the six advocates were released with the same rapidity as they had been arrested. But Vanderstraeten was brought to trial, and sentenced by a subservient judge to a heavy fine, and other penalties. On leaving the court Vanderstraeten received a public ovation, and was escorted to his house in triumph. His fine of 3,000 florins was paid by public subscription.

Undeterred by this experience, Vanderstraeten continued his literary efforts, and in 1823 he once more incurred the displeasure of the Government. He was again arrested, brought to trial, and sentenced to one year's imprisonment. But he was in bad health, and apparently his condition had been aggravated by what he had suffered in confinement whilst awaiting trial. On receiving his sentence he collapsed, and the doctors reporting that he was dying, he was permitted to return to his own house under guard. He died there the day after he received sentence.

A still more remarkable trial was that of M. Hennequin, the Burgomaster of Maestricht, in July, 1821. Elected Deputy for that city in 1817, he had soon retired from the Chamber, but he retained his civic position as head of the Corporation. Maestricht enjoyed by old charters privileges in regard to exemption from military service. The King ignored these rights, and ordered the application there of the regular law of conscription. The Burgomaster and his Council represented that this proposal was contrary to the city's charter, and when representations proved unavailing, they refused to allow the ordinances to be published or placarded in Maestricht. An order was at once given for the arrest of the Burgomaster and his Council, but on the matter being referred to the Brussels Court, it was decided that the Burgomaster was alone responsible, and that the members of the Council were to be released. The trial of M. Hennequin made a great sensation. His

friend M. Surlet de Chokier, who had given up practice at the Bar, returned to it for the special purpose of undertaking his defence. The eloquence and the skilful pleading of this great advocate carried the day, and M. Hennequin was acquitted, to the immense satisfaction of the country. This was the first actual defeat experienced by King William. Up to that incident he had enforced his will on the courts as well as the Parliament, but he gave no indication of appreciating the gravity of the occurrence.

The debates in the session of 1822 on the second half of the fiscal measures were scarcely less heated than those on the import duty. The Deputies in their opposition to the proposed tax on corn and grain—*la mouture*—were supported by the whole nation, which regarded with consternation the laying of a direct tax on the staff of life. The Belgians were in favour of Protection, but they could not understand the placing of an impost on the produce of their own fields, which furnished them with their own sustenance. They declared that the Dutch did not understand the situation because they lived chiefly on potatoes and vegetables, whereas the Belgians, like the French, preferred bread alone. A tax on wheat would bring in a large revenue in Belgium, but in Holland it would be scarcely worth collecting. Therefore it was declared that the Belgians would be taxed for the benefit of Dutchmen.

Of course, Dutch Ministers might have been able to retort that there were other taxes which bore more heavily on the North than on the South, but the main interest of the matter is the effect it produced on Belgian opinion. The Belgians were convinced that not merely was their principal and most precious article of food about to be taxed, but that they themselves were to be thus burdened for the advantage of their long-severed and now-proved-to-be exacting brothers of the North. These convictions, whether exaggerated or not, explained the energy of the Parliamentary opposition and the vehemence of the popular agitation against the projected law. Still, it received the necessary majority in the Chamber, and came into legal effect. Thereupon one of the national leaders

exclaimed that "Belgium had been rendered uninhabitable by its own people."*

While the King was forcing these taxes on his subjects in the belief that they were indispensable for the stability of his Government, he was at the same time encouraging and supporting the formation of societies and associations for the improvement of the industry and manufactures of the country. He took up himself one-half of the capital for the great mining and manufacturing enterprise founded by the Englishman Cockerill at Seraing, near Liège, in 1823. But although these royal efforts considerably aided the movement of industrial activity that then first revealed itself, and that has gone on growing ever since in Belgium, they utterly failed to nullify the bad impression produced in that country by the legislative measures described, or to obtain the popular gratitude to which, if detached from the main policy of the Dutch Government, they might have been entitled. Even the Sinking Fund founded in 1823 did not obtain the support of those who could not have been blind to its advantages because its transactions were to be conducted in secret. But bad as was the impression produced by the refusal to allow the public to have any acquaintance with its management or the results it achieved, the consequences of the revelations as to how some of the fund found its way "by order of the King" into the hands of mere adventurers were still more disastrous for any public credence to be placed in the merit of a scheme nominally intended for the public good alone.

It is necessary to recite all these instances not merely of public wrong and injury, but also of the miscarriage of good intentions, if the drifting apart of the two nations is to be appreciated. But the curious and uncertain character of the King has also to be taken into account, as furnishing the personal element in the problem that sometimes aggravated causes of friction, and at other times warped efforts meant to conciliate. Filled with the sense of his own good intentions, King William resented every action that seemed to cast the

* The opposition to the *abatage* was less acute because a tax on meat in towns affected only the wealthy, but in the debates the two measures were classed together.

slightest suspicion on them. He quarrelled with his Ministers on the smallest provocation. He resented opposition to his will, and he got rid of Hogendorp. He was not better disposed to those who wished to show the Belgians special consideration, and he dismissed Falck, who of all his advisers was the most sympathetic to Belgium. Then Van Maanen gained his ear because he was ready to be a mere tool, but his subservience was dearly purchased at the price of his being absolutely oblivious of the fact that there was such a thing as Belgian opinion in existence. But it was not merely with his Ministers that the King quarrelled. His relations with his eldest son were strained for years, and it was only when his difficulties became acute that the breach was healed. The King, who had resided in England for many years, and who was suspected by the Belgians of following a philo-English policy, could not help quarrelling with Lord Clancarty, who had been one of his greatest friends. He not merely displayed his coolness towards him, but he resorted to unkingly methods to insure his removal from the post of British Minister at his Court. We have mentioned the good traits in King William's character, but unfortunately he was too thoroughly imbued with the views of his Prussian ancestors to make either the ruler of a people imbued with the spirit of freedom or the stanch friend of men who had convictions of their own. The barrack-room system, which is the Hohenzollern ideal, has a difficulty in flourishing outside the marshlands of Brandenburg.

We have seen how serious was his conflict with the Church in the early years of his reign, when public opinion was not excited, and when a large section of the public, anxious to avert what promised to be a reaction to the old order of things, looked to the consolidation of the two divisions of the State as providing the real triumph of Liberalism. That conflict had appeared to threaten serious dangers, but they had been surmounted. Now, with new difficulties on his hands, and in the midst of a visible tension of the public mind, he formed the resolution of attempting a fresh struggle with the Church. On this occasion he went out of his way to court the danger, and when he was called upon to vindicate his line of policy

he declared that he was only following the same course as Joseph II. had pursued, unmindful of the fact that that ruler's policy had produced the Brabant Revolution, which had almost given the Belgians their independence by their own effort. King William also was bent on being a reformer, but he did not contemplate that reform on this occasion meant the supersession of his own régime.

A succession of orders and decrees passed between the years 1822 and 1825 revolutionised the existing system of education, and with it the mode of admission to employment by the State. In October, 1822, a new regulation was passed to the effect that "no one could obtain a post or any employment under Government without possessing sufficient knowledge of the national language." By the Constitution there was no national language, but this ordinance made Dutch obligatory, and its immediate effect was to disqualify the Walloon half of the Belgian nation for public service in the State. If this measure had stood alone, it would have produced great discontent, but its import was greatly increased by the decrees that accompanied and followed it on the subject of education.

The first step in this matter was comparatively inoffensive. It merely ordered that all teachers in primary schools had first to be authorised to exercise their functions by the local juries. The extension of this order to religious seminaries was the first indication of the Government's intention to place the State above the Church in educational matters. Had the King stopped here, he could have counted on the support of the Liberals, but he had an unhappy faculty of alienating his friends at the same time that he exasperated his enemies.

The next step was to order that "no one should be received as a member of a teaching religious corporation, nor even permitted to take temporary vows in such, unless he were provided with a certificate of capacity from the civil powers." On learning of these measures, the Papal Nuncio Nasalli protested, and left the country. His departure was followed by a still more stringent decree ordering that no school, college, or athenæum in which Latin was taught was to be opened without the express authority of the Minister of the

Interior. On the same day the constitution of a new College of Philosophy to be established at Louvain was published, and it was openly modelled on the lines of the Grand Seminary of Joseph II.

The new law decreed that the preliminary instruction of all candidates for the priesthood must have been received at the College of Philosophy, and that only those who passed their examinations with sufficient credit could be permitted to receive ordainment by the Bishops. As a proposal was made to evade these laws by sending candidates into France* to receive their final education and ordainment by French prelates, so that they might return to Belgium as fully-qualified priests, a further edict appeared to the effect that "no young Belgians, who shall have studied the 'humanities' or completed their academic or theological studies outside the Kingdom, are to be admitted to any (State) post whatever, or permitted to exercise any ecclesiastical function." Angry but futile debates took place in the Chamber. A still more angry and not so futile an agitation began throughout the country.

These measures, following one another in due sequence, showed clearly what the King was aiming at. He was determined to make the two countries one by placing the predominance of Holland on no uncertain basis. He was also not less determined to make his personal will superior to the Constitution and the Fundamental Law. Having made the public service and the system of education dependent on his will, it only remained for the King to gag the press which criticised his policy with a skilfulness of argument and a brilliancy of language that raised his ire. He had offended all classes, but the Liberal doctrinaires forgave some of his measures because they approved of his policy of curtailing the influence of the Church until he alienated their sympathy by assailing the freedom of the press and the uncensored right of publication. Then they, too, left him, and he stood alone. He had removed

* As a matter of fact the majority of Belgian Catholics were sent to school in France. The Jesuits had established first-class educational establishments at Amiens, St. Quentin, etc. These were suppressed in 1828, when the Order removed to Fribourg in Switzerland among other places. For details of this period Baron de Trannoy's valuable biography of Jules Malou (Brussels, 1905) ought to be consulted.

every capable or disinterested adviser from his presence. His Ministers were mere lackeys to receive his orders.

In 1826 the Belgian Liberals founded a society for the propagation of instruction and morality, and its directing body became known as "the twelve." Of these, the most eloquent and energetic was Louis De Potter, and in the wordy war that preceded the fall of the Dutch régime he took the lead, and exercised the most direct influence on his countrymen. Another member, of whom much more will be heard later on, was Sylvain Van de Weyer ; but in the events of these years it was De Potter who stood up before the country and defied the King. His articles in the press were incitations to the public to refuse obedience to the Government until it had withdrawn the new laws, which were so many infractions of the Constitution agreed upon in 1815. Never tolerant of mild or guarded press criticism, the King was furious at this open and severe defiance of his action. In accordance with his directions, De Potter was arrested and brought to trial. In December, 1828, the defendant was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment and a heavy fine. The trial and sentence produced an immense sensation. While the prisoner was conveyed to the Petits Carmes Prison, the populace displayed its resentment by proceeding to the residence of Van Maanen, the Minister of Justice, and smashing all the windows. It was a small thing, perhaps, but it showed the temper of the people. It was the first act in the great national drama.

The spirit of De Potter was far, indeed, from being tamed by imprisonment. In his prison-cell at the Little Carmelites he wrote the most remarkable pamphlet to which the public sense of wrong may be said to have given birth in Belgium. It was, as its title (*Union des Catholiques et des Libéraux dans les Pays Bas*) showed, an appeal to the Catholics and Liberals to combine in the national cause. When the King learnt by its publication that his prisoner had composed this weighty and eloquent indictment of his measures and policy, he ordered him to be banished from the State. It was a futile step. De Potter was no longer allowed to remain in Belgium, but his exhortations and inspiration remained to stimulate his countrymen.

The impression produced by the De Potter trial was immensely increased by the fact that the only advocate who would represent the Minister Van Maanen was an adventurer named Libry-Bagnano, who had once undergone a sentence for forgery, but whose servility had gained for him the King's regard. The cheques drawn on the Sinking Fund in his favour were regarded by the public as confirmation of the suspicion with which they had always regarded that institution.

The immediate consequence of De Potter's pamphlet was that the Count de Mérode,* head of the Catholic party, took the initiative in a movement for a public petition to the King. The idea caught the public imagination. Catholics and Liberals vied with each other in signing a document that soon bore 100,000 signatures. The Dutch had always scoffed at the assertion that a Belgian nation existed. Flemings and Walloons would never agree, they said, and if they did the differences between Catholics and Liberals would provide an impassable chasm. The public petition furnished the reply to this allegation. No nation could have presented a more united front to its adversaries. It may be said without undue exaggeration that among all Belgians who could sign their names there were no abstemients.

In the early hours of the movement, before its full force and importance had been revealed, the King spoke of its authors as *des infames*. This remark was reported, and became notorious. It was at once seized upon, and compared with Berlaumont's equally unfortunate expression applied to the famous petitioners in the 16th century: "*Ils ne sont que des gueux*" (They are only beggars). A society was formed among the leading petitioners, who called themselves the Association des Infames, and took as their motto *Fidèle jusqu' à l'infamie*. All this was very symptomatic of the excited state of public feeling and of the fearless manner in which the Belgians, at last hopeless of remedy at the hands of their King, set about righting their wrongs.

* On signing at the head of the petitioners, Count de Mérode, turning to Viscount Vilain XIIII. and M. de Robiano, said: "This is a step which may have incalculable consequences. I know this country, and I recall what happened in 1789."

With the close of the year 1828 it had become evident that the project of uniting the Netherlands under the sway of the House of Orange had proved a failure. It cannot be said that the Belgians did not give it a fair trial. In some respects they had shown themselves very long-suffering. They had certainly submitted when the partner or brother race betook to itself a practical monopoly of the posts in the public service. They had not gone beyond a protest when they found that all the members of the Cabinet, with at times one exception, were Dutch, alien in sentiment and religion. Yet they were in no respect less capable of managing their own affairs than their neighbours. The Belgian Parliamentary Opposition contained the eloquence and the ability of the Chamber. On the Dutch side the only men of any reputation were Hogendorp and Falck, the former removed from public life long before the crisis, the latter also removed and openly sympathetic with the Belgian cause. Among the Belgian leaders were men who by their eloquence, knowledge, and attainments would have done honour to any cause, and gained distinction in any assembly. They had acquired the confidence and admiration of their fellow-citizens long before their names had become familiar to the politicians and peoples of Europe. Europe, like King William, did not realise that the Belgians, after generations of alien rule which might well have stifled their national sentiments, were on the point of proclaiming and asserting their right to a place in the family of nations. King William's policy was a mistaken one from every point of view, but the greatest of his mistakes was in not knowing the people with whom he had to deal. They gave him every opportunity to understand them, but he wilfully refused to learn the lesson, and he could not evade the penalty of his own unyielding obstinacy.

CHAPTER III.

The Crisis.

THE events in which De Potter* played the chief part require more detailed description than the summary first given, not merely because they were the precursor of the Revolution, but also on account of their being accompanied by a manifestation of independence and initiating power by the press that had never been displayed up to that moment in any country, and that has never been surpassed since, except by the press of the Northern States of America on the eve of the Civil War. Up to the year 1827 the newspapers of Belgium, and especially those of Brussels, had been mainly edited and written by French emigrés. They were declared opponents of the Dutch, and to that extent they were eager enough in ventilating Belgian wrongs ; but secretly they wished to bring about the union of Belgium and France. The sentiment was natural enough ; it was stimulated by the conviction that there was no Belgian nationality. The first article in French faith at this period was that the Flemings and Walloons could not form a government under which they would agree to live. In other words, it was declared that Belgium was a house that could not stand alone. The men who held this view were for some time supreme in the Belgian press, but they were only a small coterie of refugees from France—exiles for the sake of their advanced Liberal opinions from their own country, then restored to its ancient dynasty ruling by right divine.

The patriots of the country were in the Chamber. There was to be heard the genuine voice of the Belgian races clamour-

* Louis De Potter, born at Bruges in 1786, died 1859. His family was of good standing in Bruges.

ing against injustice, appealing in no uncertain tones for the right to be governed by their own laws, and declaring in clearly threatening language that the patience of the people was expiring, and that their will would have to be obeyed. But the speeches in the National Assembly, assembled in another State, did not reach the ears of the masses in Belgium. It was imperatively necessary to form and develop public opinion by means of a thoroughly national and patriotic press. In 1827 the *Courrier des Pays Bas*, published at Brussels, passed entirely into the hands of the National party. De Potter joined its staff, and among its chief contributors were Ducpetiaux, Jottrand, Claes, Van de Weyer, Van Meenen, Nothomb, and others. At Liège the *Politique*, formed by Messrs. Devaux, Lebeau, and Charles Rogier, and the *Courrier de la Meuse*, controlled by M. Kersten, upheld the same views and cause. At Ghent the *Catholique*, edited by A. Bartels, and the *Mathieu Laensberg*, worked on the Flemish people, and took a great part in convincing the best Catholics that they had common interest with the Liberals in promoting a patriotic policy. The movement towards union was thus equally marked in Flanders, Brabant, and Liège. The Catholic papers were even more pronounced than the Liberals in advocating this union, and the *Mathieu Laensberg* in particular placed patriotism before prejudice. On 23rd July, 1828, the first announcement of the Union of Liberals and Catholics was made in its columns.

Notwithstanding that the King promised at the opening of the Parliamentary session in October, 1828, to abolish the decree of 20th April, 1815, and the law of 6th March, 1818, which fettered the press, the Government prosecuted the editor and chief directors of the *Courrier des Pays Bas*, MM. Ducpetiaux, Jottrand, and Claes; and when they were acquitted by the juries of the lower courts, they were brought before the tribunal of the High Court. This servile institution, which obeyed the orders of Van Maanen, the Minister of Justice, who had declared that "Ministers were the servants of the King, and not the agents of the nation," found them guilty of a breach of the press law. Ducpetiaux was sentenced to

one year's imprisonment, Jottrand to three months', and Claes to six months', whilst, to add to the severity of the punishment, they were all sent to St. Bernard, the prison for felons.

But the Government prosecutions did not end here. Van Maanen had marked down De Potter for his prey, and his prosecution followed close upon that of his colleagues on the *Courrier*. Despite the ability and eloquence of his defenders, Van Meenen and Van de Weyer, the sentence awarded by the Court was eighteen months' imprisonment. Called upon to speak in arrest of judgment, De Potter delivered a brilliant address, which made in its published form a deep impression on the public. The following passages, full of warning to the Government, may be given here : " Which has the Government most to dread ? Its own faults and indifference, or the perfidy of the men who are allowing them to go on accumulating until they prove fatal to it ? . . . Imprison a hundred writers, destroy twenty newspapers, you will have effected nothing—absolutely nothing. Others will present themselves ; still there will be publications, if only for the day ; the anonymous pamphlet may take the place of the signed article, distribution by hand supersede the agency of the post. You still have decrees in the courts and budgets in the Chamber ; in three years, in less, perhaps, decrees and budgets will fail you."

As has been stated, all the eloquence at the Bar and from the bench of the accused failed to avert an adverse sentence, and De Potter was ordered to the confinement of a prison for eighteen months. The only favour shown him was that the Petits Carmes instead of St. Bernard was assigned as his place of incarceration. Confined in his personal freedom, De Potter's liberty of expression and spirit never deserted him. His address to the King, published anonymously first in April, 1829, breathed all his old fire and independence. In it he laid down the principles upon which the Belgian people ought to work and persevere until they had gained their ends. He said : " The motto for both parties should be, ' No more privilege for anyone ! Equality for all ! Perfect liberty without other restrictions than the law and morality ! ' " This letter was published as a pamphlet, bearing De Potter's name, in the

following July, with consequences that have now to be described.

In March, 1829, a proposal was made in the Chamber to present a memorial to the King on the alarming state of the country. It was passed by a small majority, but on reaching the Senate the influence of the Dutch Ministers availed to obtain its rejection. The Government organ declared in connection with this motion that "a Prince of the dynasty of Orange-Nassau does not submit like a slave to the caprice of a factious multitude." It was a proud boast, but "a factious multitude" is a perilous epithet to apply to a people struggling for its freedom. Still, some impression was made upon the mind of the King, and he resolved to see for himself, so far as he could, what was the public feeling by making a tour through the country.

On returning from a visit to Prussia in July, 1829, King William set out on his proposed tour through the provinces of Flanders, Hainaut, and Liége. He was accompanied by his son, the Prince of Orange, who had been restored to his military rank and public office in October, 1827. At Ghent the King met with such a favourable reception that he at once came to the conclusion that the alleged grievances were invented by some designing individuals, and he hastily added that "such conduct is infamous." At Liége also the King declared that it was quite clear that the agitators were not supported by the mass of the citizens. The conclusions drawn from a more or less organised reception in those two cities were misleading, and after some unpleasant and menacing incidents elsewhere the King cut his programme short and returned to The Hague.

The state of affairs in Belgium was beginning to attract the attention of foreign countries. Palmerston visited Paris in 1829, and his biographer, Sir Henry Bulwer, states that he discovered that the favourite topic of conversation in the French capital was the annexation of Belgium by France, and that Holland and Prussia were to be compensated in Oldenburg and Saxony respectively. This latent ambition did not help the French King Charles X. out of his own troubles, nor blind him to the imminence of the collapse of his own power. When

the Prince of Orange was in Paris, in September, 1827, Charles X. gave expression to the following melancholy but not less remarkable prophecy: "My dear Prince," he said, "we are going to part. God knows when we shall meet again, but when you hear that a misfortune has befallen me, you may be sure that you are yourself about to feel it on your side."

The rumours of French projects, which were probably exaggerated in transmission, reached De Potter in prison, and he issued another appeal to the Belgians, urging them to combine against any scheme of foreign aggression, and to baffle their would-be despoilers. In this address, which duly appeared in the *Courrier des Pays Bas*, occurs the first reference to the part that England might be expected to play in the coming international complications. He wrote: "England must prevent the possession of Antwerp and Ostend by France or any other Great Power which would thereby menace her at any moment." His main conclusion, therefore, was that the Belgians might rely on the sympathy of England in their separatist movement, and that any Power attempting to compass their subjugation would encounter her unflinching opposition. This analysis of the causes of British policy displayed great acumen, for, on the surface of things, the most obvious fact in the situation was the cordiality of the Courts of St. James's and The Hague in their mutual relations; but De Potter saw that the private and personal relations of royal families can never override the pressing needs of national policy. At the same time, De Potter and his associates continued to disclaim all intention of fomenting civil disturbance or provoking a revolution. Recording his impressions of this period some time later, De Potter wrote: "The idea of a revolution never entered my mind, nor do I think it entered into the mind of any Belgian."

On 19th October, 1829, King William opened at The Hague the last session, as it was destined to be, of the States General of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. The National petition of the Belgian people for the redress of their grievances, bearing 150,000 signatures, and supported, as it was declared, by 360,000 heads of families, formed an ominous introduction

to the labours of the Parliament. But the King, misled by his reception during his tour, congratulated himself on being supported by the Belgians throughout the provinces. The reply to this self-deception was an enumeration of the long list of Belgian grievances, whilst all the Government measures, so far as they related to the South Netherlands, were opposed or declared inadequate. When the King realised the position, he became angry, declaring that—"I know my duty; I will maintain with all my power that Constitution to which I have taken the oath." But the Constitution had left him practically autocrat, because it had evaded or eliminated the principle of ministerial responsibility. His words, then, signified, "I have the best intentions, but I will not be driven to go farther or faster than my royal will." Meantime the storm was rising, and he saw not the breakers. He had been misled into believing that Flanders was with him, that Flemings and Dutch were true brothers, and that all the peril came from those who spoke French and sympathised with France. Yet on the very morrow of the opening of the final session M. A. Bartels published at Ghent his *Flanders and the Belgian Revolution*.*

The following passages from the King's Speech at the opening of the last session of the Chambers on 11th December, 1829, will show the frame of mind in which he approached the grave crisis before him :

NOBLE AND PUISSANT LORDS,

The draft law now submitted to your Noble Powers is an unpleasant but necessary consequence of what is happening in some of the provinces of the Kingdom.

In the midst of peace without and tranquillity within, with prosperity

* A minor event threw light on Flemish feeling. When the Vicomte Vilain XIII. resigned the Governorship of Ghent the people subscribed and presented him with a gold medal bearing on one side his own effigy, and on the other the inscription : "Le pouvoir les proscriit, le peuple les couronne." A word may be added here about the curious name of Vilain XIII., which is one of the most ancient in Belgium. The general belief that the figure XIII. was added to his name by a Vicomte Vilain out of deference to Louis XIV. will not bear examination, for the figure was appended before the great French King was born. Lindanus noted in 1612 that the figures appear on each side of the name (*sic* XIII., Vilain XIII.) on the family crest. The Vilains are descended from Wichman, brother of Herman, Duke of Saxony, in the 9th century, and held till the 13th the title of Counts of Ghent. The name Vilain was adopted in 1240. The popular legend in Belgium is that the last Count of Ghent had fourteen wicked sons—hence the name Vilain XIII.

attending several branches of industry, under a régime of moderate laws and political and civil liberty, we see a small section of our subjects misled by the exaggeration and excited by the effervescence of the ill-disposed who fail to appreciate all these benefits, and who put themselves, in the most dangerous and scandalous manner, in opposition to the Government, our laws, and our paternal institutions.

The licence of the press, that press of which we desired to assure the freedom with less hindrance than exists in any other country of Europe, has unfortunately contributed only too much to spread disquiet, discord, and distrust, to propagate doctrines as subversive of all social institutions, whatever might be the form of Government, as they are altogether contrary to the Government of the Netherlands, as established by the Fundamental Law, and to those rights of our House which we have never desired to exercise in an unrestrained manner, but which of our own will we have ever restrained so far as we judged it compatible with the desirable prosperity, customs, and character of the nation.

But, Noble and Puissant Lords, the nation has the right to expect from us that we should display as much firmness in repulsing inconsiderate pretensions as zeal in accepting wise representations. This firmness which forms the base of social well-being is also the main principle of our reign, and we do not doubt that the assurance here given of our repugnance to cross the line separating necessary firmness and excessive indulgence will encourage well-meaning persons, and deprive others of the hope of seeing means of violence and resistance succeed.

We add the further assurance that never will the declamations of an impetuous boisterousness, nor the demands of the importunate, lead us to acquiesce in their views.

This message did not stand alone. On the day following its publication Van Maanen called upon all officers of justice, and all persons employed in public departments, under pain of dismissal to send him, within forty-eight hours, their "adhesion to the principles which the King had especially declared to be the rules of the Government." This order was an act of despotism, and aimed at establishing the absolute right of the King to dictate to his subjects their opinions and duties. It came, too, at a dangerous moment. The country was simmering with disaffection, and this act of tyranny interfering with, and threatening to withdraw, the means of livelihood of a large class, stimulated the growing indignation of the Belgian nation. Neither the King nor his Ministers seemed able to measure the significance of their own acts. They feigned astonishment when they saw how their measures were received in the country, and the refusal to make an adhesion which was foreign to the Constitution and to the conditions of employment was interpreted as an act of treason.

What was thought by everyone was again crystallised in words by De Potter. From prison he sent to the papers the rules of the Patriotic Confederation. They guaranteed all

officials of every grade who lost their posts through refusing to adhere to Van Maanen's circular one-half, and in certain cases two-thirds, of their salary. They also provided for the full refunding of pensions or emoluments lost for the same reason to members of the Chamber. Writing in the document dated 30th January, 1830, that contained these regulations which had been carefully drawn up in conjunction with his friends, De Potter declared his profound conviction that "the victory of the good cause, that of the people, can no longer be in doubt." The same idea was expressed in his letter to the King under the pseudonym of "Demophile":

SIRE,

Your courtiers and your ministers, your flatterers and counsellors, deceive and mislead you. The system in which they wish your Government to persist will infallibly ruin it, and bring to pass a catastrophe to which it will be too late to apply a remedy when the fatal hour has arrived.

The King might have forgiven, or at least overlooked, words, but the action of the Patriotic Confederation was an open defiance. It was declared to be an attempt to establish a State within a State, and the legal prosecution of its supporters was decreed. The Government had not to go far in their search for the man chiefly responsible, for he was in their power. On 9th February, 1830, an order was given to seize De Potter's papers in his prison-cell as well as at his residence. The search gave some results that were not expected. A long correspondence was discovered between the prisoner and M. Tielemans, an official in the Foreign Affairs Department. Owing to his post, Tielemans had possessed early knowledge of the plans and intentions of the Government, and these he had communicated to De Potter. It was alleged that he was the real author of the rules of the Patriotic Confederation, and at least he had suggested the idea of compensation to his colleague as the only means of averting the subjugation of the official classes by the Government. Immediately on the discovery Tielemans was arrested, and after all the documents found in his possession had been examined, the editors and publishers of several of the most important papers were also arrested. Among them was Adolphe Bartels, the

Ghent publicist, and the author of the pamphlet on Flanders and the Belgian Revolution.

In April, 1830, De Potter, Tielemans, and Bartels were brought to trial as principals, the editors and publishers referred to being arraigned at the same time as their accomplices and accessories. During the earlier stages of this sensational affair an incident occurred that revealed how the feeling of the people was becoming estranged from the ruling family. The Prince of Orange, who certainly believed himself to be animated by friendly sentiments towards the Belgians, had always enjoyed their tolerant appreciation, and a little glamour surrounded the young Prince who was generally designated in the press "the hero of Quatre Bras and Waterloo." Accompanied by the Princess, he took up his residence in his palace at Brussels early in 1830, intending to stop there for some months. They had only been there a day or two when an unpleasant event occurred. The jewels of the Princess, including some very valuable diamonds, were stolen, and no clue could be obtained as to the thief. The King, who was already beginning to think of the necessity of resorting to force against his Belgian subjects, would not allow the Prince to remain in Brussels, and sent him a peremptory order to leave at once for The Hague. The arrival of the Prince and Princess in Brussels, the theft of the latter's jewels, and their sudden departure for Holland, all occurred in two or three days, and set the people gossiping. A cruel slander was circulated to the effect that there had been no theft at all, and that the Prince or Princess had invented the affair in order to libel the Belgians. As the theft was undoubtedly* perpetrated, the public incredulity showed how completely Belgian goodwill had been alienated from the House of Orange. Even the popularity of the Prince of Orange as a man no longer existed.

The second trial of De Potter began on 19th April, 1830, the other prisoners being tried at the same time, and lasted eleven days. Despite the eloquence of their counsel,

* The thief was captured in New York with some of the jewels in his possession, and was sentenced at The Hague in 1832 to death, subsequently commuted to penal servitude for life.

MM. Van de Weyer, Van Meenen, and Gendebien, the accused were all found guilty on 30th April. De Potter was sentenced to eight years' banishment, Tielemans and Bartels to seven years', and all to a period of police supervision after their return equal to the length of their sentence. A few weeks later De Potter* was put across the frontier into Prussia, but when the July Revolution sent Charles X. into exile, De Potter hastened to Paris, where he was favourably placed for the purpose of watching and influencing events in his own country.

The De Potter prosecution marked the climax of official coercion by the Netherlands Government. In the belief, perhaps, that force had proved triumphant, the King had recourse to concession and conciliation. There was, perhaps, another cause. A majority in the States General could no longer be counted on. The King had alienated every one of his Belgian sympathisers. A serried mass of Belgian delegates faced their Dutch colleagues, or rather opponents, and that meant equality of voting. Government measures supported by fifty-five delegates were opposed by as many, and that meant a block in the business of the country, for no Bills could be passed. If there was equality in voting, there was none in oratory. The Dutch members were no match for their adversaries. They remained silent in face of the denunciations of Stassart, De Gerlache, le Hon, De Brouckère, Reyphins, and Van Crombrugghe. Even the King was impressed. Having got rid of his most troublesome critic in De Potter, he again thought of measures that might allay Belgian dissatisfaction. In May he withdrew the unpopular law on education, and on 4th June he signed the decree making the use of both languages—French and Dutch—optional. Probably these concessions were made too late, even if they had been scrupulously enforced, to avert the severance of the two States; but all the good they might have effected was at once rendered nugatory by a subsequent order of 21st June, fixing the High Court at

* As soon as De Potter heard of the French Revolution, he wrote to the King a final letter, dated "Aix-la-Chapelle, 2nd August, 1830," in which, comparing the Belgian situation and the French, occur the words: "The same vertigo of imprudence and iniquity will everywhere provoke the same catastrophe."

The Hague, and all Government departments at various towns in Holland. No loophole was left to the Belgians for indulging the pleasing belief that they had the share to which they were entitled by the Constitution in their own government.

The great increase in the Belgian population during these fifteen years had made the disparity between the numbers of the two races in the army and the public service still more glaring. Whereas at the Union Belgium had contained 3,000,000 people to the less than 2,000,000 of Holland, in 1830 the disproportion had increased to 3,921,082* Belgians to 2,314,987 Dutch. Yet less than one-fourth—530 of all ranks—of the officers in the army were Belgians. The injustice seemed the greater as, during the great Javanese insurrection in 1825-8, the Belgians, numbering 3,000 men, had especially distinguished themselves. The Belgians realised more and more that civil and military posts were assigned preferentially to the Dutch. They had no hope of redressing this wrong until they had acquired an equal share in the government of their country, and this, after some specious and deceptive concessions, was clearly to be denied them.

It will always be a debatable opinion how long the Belgians would have refrained from open opposition by force to their alien Government if there had been no Revolution in France. But the fact is beyond dispute that that event set the match to the discontent and resentment that were prevalent throughout Belgium. Up to 20th July the development of the national movement had been slow, and even uncertain, but after that date events progressed with extraordinary rapidity and resistless force until Belgium produced a Revolution of her own in fulfilment of the prophecy of the last Bourbon King to the Prince of Orange.

On 20th July, during the progress of some popular fêtes at Vauxhall in the Park of Brussels, the news arrived of the second fall of the old French monarchy, and of the establishment of a modern constitutional kingdom under the Orleans

* In this number is included the population of Luxembourg and Limburg. The population of what is now Belgium was about 3,700,000.

branch of the Bourbon family. Considering the public tension, it is scarcely surprising to read in the newspapers of the day that there were disturbances in the streets of Brussels, and that bands of excited men and women paraded the boulevards, exclaiming, "Long live Liberty! Long live France!" Many arrests were made, and orders were issued to prosecute several newspapers. The agitation did not continue. It died out with remarkable suddenness, and the Dutch authorities, momentarily disturbed in their sense of security, came back to their old conviction that there was no real danger. The King showed no diminution in blindness and obstinacy, and proved himself as incapable of reading the signs of the times as his Ministers. A little incident will show that the rest of the world were not as blind to the fact as the Dutch authorities. Some months before Baron Gagern, aide-de-camp to King William, was at Schloss Johannisberg, and Prince Metternich asked him how things were in Belgium. Gagern replied that "Dutch authority was being consolidated there," at which the Prince burst out laughing.

On 8th August, King William arrived during the morning in Brussels, and the Prince of Orange joined him some hours later. They intended visiting the theatre, but they were advised not to go, as some popular demonstration might be expected. Count Bylandt, the same General who had distinguished himself at Quatre Bras and Waterloo, and who now commanded the garrison of Brabant, reported to his Sovereign that a change had come over public opinion, and warned him to be on his guard. Count Mercy-Argenteau, the Austrian Ambassador, went still further, declaring that "any day an explosion may occur." In the streets the evidence was scarcely less clear than in the journals. Men wore the tricolour or sang the "Marseillaise"; in the papers appeared the lines, "Français, faites un pas et la Belgique est à vous." Alarmed by what he saw and heard, the King hastily left Brussels on 12th August, and he was never destined to set foot in it again.

The King's departure was immediately followed by what may be correctly described as the first attempt of the Belgian

leaders to establish a Government of their own. Several meetings of prominent politicians, lawyers, and journalists were held at the office of the *Courrier des Pays Bas*, the newspaper that had so staunchly upheld the popular cause; and on 15th August, Messrs. Van de Weyer and Gendebien openly proposed a resolution to the effect that the time had arrived to carry out a revolution in Belgium. The other members of the committee did not go quite so far, and after some discussion the motion was adjourned for one month. But at the same time the committee commissioned Van de Weyer and Gendebien to proceed to Paris and London to acquaint the Governments of France and England with the facts of the situation, and to ascertain their views and feelings. This decision was not carried into effect until a later period, due to the rapidity with which events moved.

The agitation in Brussels continued to increase as the month of August advanced. The papers published articles comparing the House of Orange in Belgium to that of Bourbon in France, and declaring that it merited the same fate. It was to France mainly that the Belgians looked for aid, and some of the leaders even exclaimed: "If the French army will come to our aid, we do not want the help of anyone else." But at that moment the French army was thoroughly disorganised, as the Orleans Government had not had time to establish any regular system, and it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for it to send a properly equipped force into Belgium. M. Gendebien of those who have been named was particularly affected with this ultra-French zeal, but the majority of the Belgian leaders were wiser and better informed. M. Nothomb, the most capable of all of them, who displayed the practical sagacity of a statesman during the whole of the crisis, summed up the considerations of the moment with admirable force, and thus described the alternatives before the Belgian people: "To declare a Republic meant hostility with all the world, including France. To decree union with France meant war with the other Powers, including England. There remained only one practical course—viz., to maintain independence, and to enter on negotiations for the establishment of

a monarchy. Then alone might a new Belgium be established in old Europe." These counsels were given at an opportune moment. They laid down the principles on which the liberators of their country consistently worked during the months preceding the advent of King Leopold.

King William's birthday fell on 24th August, and the usual preparations were made to celebrate the occasion by a popular fête and illuminations. The official world still pretended to be ignorant of what was impending. Yet on the walls of public buildings were found placards announcing: "Monday, fireworks; Tuesday, illuminations; Wednesday, revolution"; others were limited to the words, "Down with the King! Long live De Potter!" The aspect of the city was so menacing that an official order was issued postponing the illuminations. Even then the Dutch authorities seemed to think that the storm would pass off, for no military precautions were taken. The garrison, never strong, was at its lowest strength, and there was no artillery at all in the city. General Bylandt returned the total of his force on this day at 1,468 officers and men.

The match was set to the magazine by the performance of the *Muette de Portici* at the Theatre de la Monnaie on the night of 25th August. The selection of that emotional opera, with its revolutionary incentive in the example of Massaniello, was significant, and may even have been arranged by some of the Belgian leaders. At all events, there was an air of expectation among the citizens. The theatre was crowded to hear Auber's masterpiece, of which Charles X. of France had said, "It should not be played too frequently"; and the multitude, waiting to learn what happened in the theatre, crowded the streets of the lower town. When the tenor delivered Massaniello's famous air—

"Plutôt mourir que rester misérable,
Pour un esclave est-il quelque danger?
Tombe le joug qui nous accable,
Et sous nos coups perisse l'étranger.
Amour sacré de la patrie,
Rends nous l'audace et la fierté;
À mon pays je dois la vie,
Il me devra sa liberté!"

—the audience rose in their seats and sang the air over again in chorus.* Then, rushing from the house into the square in front of the theatre, they raised shouts of “Down with the Dutch! Down with the Ministers!”

Their resentment found a nearer mark. The office of the *National*, the organ of the Government, edited by Libry-Bagnano, was close at hand, and on someone’s suggestion the crowd hastened thither. Having smashed the windows and done other damage, it was proposed to attack Libry’s residence a little farther on in the Rue de la Madeleine. Having forced an entrance, the house was pillaged from top to bottom, the furniture being thrown into the streets and destroyed by the mob; but Libry himself had had timely warning, and escaped.

Then the crowd broke into the gunsmiths’ and armed themselves with a miscellaneous assortment of weapons. Emboldened by their success, and by the evident helplessness of the authorities—for when some gendarmes appeared on the scene they were cowed by the menaces of the people, and agreed to do nothing—the demonstrators hastened, while the night was still young, to attack the houses of some of the Ministers. The houses of the Crown Prosecutor, the Director of Police, and the Commandant-General Vauthier, were attacked in turn, and more or less damaged.

Then the whole rage of the detached and unorganised crowds became concentrated on the mansion of M. Van Maanen, the Minister of Justice, who was the most deeply hated of all the officials. His mansion lay in the Petit Sablon, immediately below the Palais d’Arenberg, and it was gutted. Fortunately for him, he was absent, or his life would assuredly have been forfeited. It was during this closing scene of the night’s stormy proceedings that the first shots were fired. Some Grenadiers had been collected near the Place Royale, and the crowd, believing that they would not fire, passed heedlessly and confidently before them. The appearance of

* As the late M. Louis Hymans wrote: “This revolutionary drama produced the effect that might have been expected at such a moment. The impassioned accents of the Neapolitan hero, the appeals to revolt, the anathemas against the foreigner, provoked in the hall indescribable enthusiasm.”

the flames from Van Maanen's house, or the apprehension that the ranks would be broken, led to the order being given to these Grenadiers to fire, which was done. Five Belgians were killed and a good many more were wounded. It was the first blood shed in the Belgian Revolution.

After this incident the streets of the upper town gradually emptied, and the troops proceeded to bivouac on the Place du Palais, and in the gardens of the Palace itself, and of the Prince of Orange's Palace. The Dutch garrison thus remained in possession of a good portion of the upper town, but the lower town was entirely in the hands of the Belgians. The committee of control, which now assumed the title of the Regency, was employed during the week following the events described in arranging for the maintenance of order. The mob threatened to get out of hand, and several outrages on peaceful citizens called for rigorous measures. The hoisting of the French tricolour on the Hôtel de Ville was also symptomatic of the uncertain feeling of the hour, but its prompt removal and the substitution of the Brabant flag—red, yellow, and black—calmed the minds of the public. For the purpose of maintaining order, and with the view of preventing the Revolution from degenerating into mob-rule, the Regency decreed the formation of a Garde Bourgeoise. General Pletinckx, an ex-cavalry officer, was placed in command, and on the first day between 300 and 400 guards were enrolled on the Grand Place. A few days later the force had increased to several thousand, and Baron Emanuel d'Hooghvorst, one of the most popular men in the country, was appointed to the supreme command of the corps. While devoting most of his time to the training of his men, Baron d'Hooghvorst, mindful of the perils of the situation, entered into negotiations with General Bylandt for the conclusion of a truce pending the reference of certain matters to The Hague.

The Dutch commander agreed that no more troops should enter the town. There was less merit in this concession than the Belgians thought, for General Bylandt had summoned troops from Vilvoide, Antwerp, Malines, and Ghent, and had received replies that none could be sent. General Ghigny, at

Ghent, was not less emphatic than General Chassé at Antwerp in declaring that not a man could be spared. The towns were already in the hands of the Belgians, and the Dutch troops were concentrated in either the citadels or the forts. When Bylandt received assurances that order would be maintained, and that his own force would be left unmolested, it was little for him to say that no more troops should enter the town, more especially as he knew that none were available. Still, in the result the arrangement was not unfortunate. It restored calm to the city, and there was an end for the time to the bloodshed that would otherwise have been serious and fruitless. But the Dutch themselves knew that it was only the calm before the storm. As one of their officers said, "We must keep in readiness, for at any moment we may have to mount our horses."

After several meetings of the Notables at the Hôtel de Ville, among whom now appeared Count Werner de Mérode, Count Felix de Mérode, Count de Lalaing, and Count Cornet de Grez, in addition to the representatives of the press and Parliament, it was decided to send a deputation from their body to The Hague. Count Felix de Mérode and four others were chosen for the mission, which left for The Hague on 28th August. Two days later it reached the Dutch capital, and on the same day 6,000 fresh Dutch troops from Holland, under the command of Prince Frederick, entered Vilvorde, only eight miles from Brussels. There cannot be two opinions that, if Prince Frederick had at once pressed on to the capital with his force, he would have crushed the rising, so far as Brussels was concerned, at a blow before the Belgian junta had collected any force capable of serious resistance. When the advance was made, three weeks later, the whole situation had altered. Never were the evils of delay and hesitation demonstrated more clearly; never had a people more reason to bless the tutelary spirits that may be supposed to watch over the champions of a righteous cause than the Belgians had at this juncture.

King William granted the deputation an audience. His reception of the Belgian delegates was cold, but not absolutely

hostile. He referred again to his affection for the Belgians and his good intentions, but he could make no concessions so long as a pistol was held at his throat. His exact words were : " I do not wish to see the blood of my subjects flow. I have a horror of bloodshed. But I should be the laughing-stock of all Europe if I were to yield with the pistol at my throat to the mad measures, the complaints and grievances, imagined by some disturbers of the public peace." The deputation saw clearly that the King was unchanged, and that no real remedy for the evils of the situation would emanate from him. The Belgian proposal, that there should be a separation of the administrations of the two countries, and that the Prince of Orange should be appointed Viceroy or Lieutenant-Governor of Belgium, was received with silence and scorn. Later on it would have been gladly accepted, but then it was too late. The Dutch appreciation of the situation was always too late.

Meantime, the Prince of Orange had arrived at Laeken, and taken up his residence there. He was thus close to the three northern gates of Brussels, and at the same time in immediate touch with the troops under his brother at Vilvorde. He invited Baron d'Hooghvorst and any of his colleagues who liked to come to visit him and discuss the situation. When they arrived, the Prince noticed that several of them wore button-holes of the newly chosen national colours, and he did not conceal his anger. Going up to one of them—M. Rouppe—he exclaimed, grasping the offending badge : " Sir, you know the penalty under the Code for wearing illegal colours." M. Rouppe was equal to the occasion : " This badge, with the colours of the burghers under my command, is the token of patriotism, and not of rebellion." The discussion of terms did not make any satisfactory progress. The Prince expressed his willingness to enter the city in peaceful guise with his troops, but only on the condition that the offending colours were removed. The Belgian representatives departed without giving any positive reply, stating that they must report to their colleagues, who would deliberate on the matter.

When the people of Brussels learnt of the result of this mission, they became very excited, and at once organised a

general levy. Between 8,000 and 10,000 men were raised in one day (31st August). In the same short interval barricades sprang up in every direction. To the cry of "Aux armes," and to the sound of the bells of Ste Gudule and the other churches, the able-bodied of the citizens rose up to defend their liberties with their lives. At the same time a reply was sent to the Prince of Orange refusing to admit his troops, but offering a passage for himself and his staff. As to the removal of the offending badges and placards, a blunt refusal was sent back.

This intimation was conveyed to the Prince of Orange, who had joined his brother at his headquarters at Vilvorde, by a second delegation, headed by the Prince de Ligne. When the Prince learnt that the badges would not be removed, he showed much excitement and indignation. The Prince de Ligne sought to compose him by asking him to display moderation. The Dutch officers present set themselves to imitate the attitude of their Prince, and a Dutch General even went so far as to rattle his sword in its scabbard. Major Van der Smissen, who had done so well at Waterloo, turned on this officer, and requested him to be more respectful in his attitude. The excitement of the audience seemed to calm the Prince, and, restraining his feelings, he said he would fulfil his promise to visit the city, and that he would come accompanied only by his staff. He then made a final attempt to secure the display of the Orange colours, but, finding this fruitless, he gave way on this point. All was arranged as the Belgians dictated.

In accordance with the arrangement agreed upon, the Garde Bourgeoise assembled at the Laeken Gate early the following morning, 1st September, in anticipation of the Prince's arrival. Ten thousand men, armed in miscellaneous fashion, but animated by a high spirit, were massed on the Place d'Anvers, and shortly before ten o'clock Baron d'Hooghvorst and other members of the Provisional Government rode up to be in readiness to receive the Prince. A sufficient opening was made in the barricades to admit of the passage of a small cavalcade. At ten o'clock precisely the Prince of Orange, accompanied by six officers in uniform and two servants in plain livery, all riding,

presented himself outside the gate of Laeken, and admission was at once given to the party.

When the Prince saw the barricades inside the gate he seemed to hesitate, and his displeasure became quite marked on beholding the flags and ribbons displaying the Brabant colours. The troops presented arms, the officers saluted, and the Prince began his ride through the city. A glance had shown him that it was too late, and would be dangerous to draw back. When he reached the Place d'Anvers there were some cries of "Vive le Prince!" more or less drowned, however, in louder cries of "Vive la Liberté!" The Prince said to those nearest him: "Yes; long live Liberty! but why not add 'Long live the King!'" At this there were angry protests, and some friendly voices begged him to be silent if he valued his life. The small cavalcade resumed its progress through the narrow streets crowded with spectators, who were kept back by only a thin line of the citizen army. As the cortège passed out of the Place de la Monnaie into the narrow Marché aux Herbes the crowd became more excited, and even menacing, in its attitude, and shouts were raised that the Prince must proceed to the Hôtel de Ville. The Belgian officers—Van der Smissen among others—became alarmed for the Prince's safety, and urged him to comply, while advantage was taken of the belief of the crowd that this step was intended to move on once more.

The Prince had shown considerable courage and coolness during this trying ordeal, but at last his self-control abandoned him, and, finding himself close to the Rue de la Violette, he suddenly set his horse at a barricade,* cleared it, and galloped at full speed to the Palace, where Bylandt and his small force stood ready to welcome and protect him. It was not the most dignified ending to his memorable ride through an insurgent city, but it was in no way a reflection on his courage. Chagrin and disappointment at his inability to bring the people round to his view, or even to make any impression upon them, were probably the main causes of his emotion and loss of self-control.

* This and the subsequent scenes in the Palace are well described in Mr. C. White's *Belgian Revolution*, pp. 246-254, but such details have no historical importance, and are beyond our limits.

Having reached a place of safety, the Prince of Orange seems to have recovered his self-confidence and calmness. He had passed through a severe ordeal, and he had the satisfaction of feeling that he had passed through it without injury to himself or to the chances of pacification. It is a noteworthy fact that, fast as he had galloped, the Belgian officers responsible for his personal safety considered it their duty to follow in his traces, and, clearing the barricades after him, they reached the Palace some minutes later. Nor was this all. The good people of Brussels love a show, and do not like to be kept out of any amusement that may be going on. They also streamed over the barricades up the steep streets to the fashionable quarter, and only halted when they saw in front of them the Dutch regiments with fixed bayonets. Nothing happened. The bands even struck up the "Nassau March."

The calm outside was not reflected inside the Palace. The Prince of Orange angrily demanded of the Belgian officers who followed him for his own protection why they had come. He said: "What do you want? A revolution? the fall of the Dynasty?" and then, without pausing, he denounced the colours of Brabant as revolutionary colours.

The Prince of Orange, like his father, failed to realise the facts of the situation. He was also unable to realise the great opportunity offered to himself. Long afterwards Prince Talleyrand, speaking to him in London on the occurrences of this particular day, asked him why he had not allowed the Belgian people to proclaim him head of their Government, as he said would undoubtedly have been the case if the Prince had only consented to continue his ride to the Hôtel de Ville. The Prince is reported to have been as much taken aback by the question of the old French diplomatist as he was by the energy of the Belgian demonstration on the occasion to which he referred. He replied, therefore, rather lamely: "But what would France have said and done?"

Talleyrand smiled, and replied: "We should have made a hell of a row [*crié comme de beaux diables*], but you would none the less have been King."

CHAPTER IV.

The Revolution.

1830

IN the history of great political crises there will always be considerable diversity among chroniclers, and even participators, as to the exact moment when a change of system or Sovereign became inevitable, and there never has been a revolution without many stages or halting-places, at which it seemed possible, by some different course of action, to have averted the supreme appeal to force. No revolution passed through more incipient stages of this sort than that in Belgium, and if we fix the transition from a political crisis to open revolution at the Prince of Orange's headlong gallop to the upper town, it will be seen that we are well aware that several pacific efforts have to be recorded before the cannon began to speak.

When the Prince of Orange had vented his displeasure on his escort, he seems to have recovered the mastery of himself, and taken some account of the facts of the situation. Perhaps the calm and weighty intervention of M. Sylvain Van de Weyer, who was present, and who described once more the grievances of the Belgians, contributed to this result, but at all events the Prince withdrew to his cabinet, and drafted a proclamation, in which he offered to act as intermediary between the people and the King. This proclamation was submitted to and approved by some of the Belgian leaders, notably M. Gendebien, and in the evening of 1st September—the day of the Prince's entry—it was placarded over the town. The same evening, by a curious fatality, the Belgian deputation to The Hague of 29th August returned from its abortive errand.

The 2nd September was singularly calm ; it was a kind of

reaction after the excitement and strain of the day before. In the evening the Prince of Orange gave a dinner, at which were present the leading Belgian notabilities as well as the Dutch officers. One English officer at least—Colonel Jones, aide-de-camp to the Duke of Wellington—was present. There was some restraint on the company. False alarms came in from time to time, and at least once Bylandt mounted his horse and rode to the advanced posts to see if all was well, for it was freely rumoured that the insurrection had begun. The Prince again became excited, and, addressing Bylandt, said : “ Resist to the last man, and tell me when the moment comes for me to put myself at the head of the troops, sword in hand.” The rumours proved false, and the banquet ended, to the relief of all.

On 1st September the Prince had offered to be the intermediary for the Belgians with his father. On 3rd September he was told definitely what they wanted. The Belgian nation demanded the administrative separation of the north and south divisions of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. When the Prince received this formal notification, a new fear assailed him. His sympathies with the Belgians were not inconsiderable, and they were regarded as excessive by both his family and the Dutch. To forward a suggestion for the disruption of the Kingdom seemed to him only too certain to bring down on himself the increased displeasure and suspicion of his father. He thought to soften the suggestion, and perhaps to give it a better chance of acceptance by taking the Belgian demands in person, and by explaining what he had done, and what measures he thought the situation required. For this reason he decided to leave Brussels, promising to return in a fortnight. It was one of the many famous promises in history of which events did not permit the fulfilment.

At the same time that the Prince announced his departure he agreed that the Dutch troops should evacuate Brussels. At three o'clock in the afternoon of 3rd September the Prince left for Antwerp and The Hague, and at the same hour Bylandt's force began its march by the Laeken Gate for Prince Frederick's camp at Vilvorde. On the same day the Dutch garrison at Louvain, some 500 young troops under Colonel

Gaillard, evacuated the place, retiring to the Dutch frontier. Pillage and incendiarism were reported at Bruges and other places. Volunteers from Namur, Mons, and Tournai arrived in Brussels, bringing promises of support from the Walloon districts. The withdrawal of the Dutch troops emboldened the most timid, and the belief prevailed that the country could be liberated without any bloodshed. This confidence was certainly not diminished when a solid body of 300 Liége volunteers, escorting two cannon, and led by Charles Rogier and De Bosch, marched into the city on the day following the departure of the Dutch. This incident was important, because the Walloons of Liége were animated by more pronounced feelings against the Dutch than any other section of the nation; and, being a people of remarkable energy and force of character, they stimulated the efforts and confidence of the citizens of Brussels when they showed signs of flagging.

Meantime the Prince of Orange reached The Hague, and informed his father of what had happened, and of what he had promised. It is even believed that he went so far as to recommend the adoption of the Belgian proposal for administrative separation. But the King was in no mood to listen to him. He refused his sanction to the demand for administrative separation, and he forbade the Prince to think of returning to Brussels. It is true that he dismissed Van Maanen, the Minister of Justice, but so tardy was the publication of the fact that it was not known in Brussels till 6th September, and by that time it was also known that the King refused separation, and prohibited his son from fulfilling his promise to return to Brussels.

On 5th September, King William issued a proclamation in which he set himself to minimise the importance of the Belgian movement by speaking of "disturbances in two of our provinces," and the royal view found support in the Dutch press, which began to attack the Belgian insurgents with bitterness, and to call for sharp measures of repression. The principal paper of Amsterdam declared: "We must remember that rebels' blood is not brothers' blood." But while these brave words were being uttered in Holland the Dutch troops in

Belgium were retiring nearer their base. Prince Frederick transferred his headquarters from Vilvorde to Antwerp.

The States General had been summoned to meet at The Hague, and the King decided to submit to their judgment not the explicit demand of the Belgians for a separate administration, but the academic question whether there was any necessity to alter the Constitution of the Kingdom by introducing changes into the Fundamental Law. A considerable number of the Belgian members—thirty-two out of fifty-five—obeyed the summons to The Hague, and to one of them—M. de Gerlache, who was notoriously in favour at this time of a pacific settlement under the Orange Dynasty—the King remarked: "God pity Belgium!" The observation betrayed the resolution not to meet the Belgians half-way. Further proof of this was afforded in the long address with which the King opened the session. There was the usual declaration of his royal and inalienable rights, and once more he dwelt on his affection and regard for his subjects in the southern half of his Kingdom; but of practical suggestion or remedy for the situation not a trace could be found. The States were called upon to furnish a demonstration of their loyalty rather than of their capacity as practical administrators. Still, after a week's debate they did pass a resolution in favour of an inquiry into the situation, and by a slight straining of the language used it might be interpreted as signifying an admission that separation had become desirable.

While the discussion was slowly proceeding at The Hague, events moved more rapidly at Brussels. The departure of the Prince of Orange and the Dutch troops was generally regarded there as the downfall of Dutch authority. It was suggested that some regular administration should be organised in its place, and there was a great public demand for the establishment of a Provisional Government. On this point the leaders were not in agreement with the mass of the public, and especially with the Liège contingent, which desired to push matters to extremities. The proposal to found a Provisional Government was defeated on the ground that it would signify "war," and close the door to all possibility of an arrangement

or compromise ; but a suggestion to establish “ a Committee of Public Safety ” was adopted, because it did not imply an open defiance of the Dutch. It might be regarded as a measure in accordance with the general interest even by the authorities at The Hague. Eight men prominent by their position or labours were appointed to form the committee, but of these only five acted. They were Messrs. Rouppe, Gendebien, Van de Weyer, Meeus, and Count Felix de Mérode ; and they were generally spoken of as the Committee of Five.

The Committee was appointed on 8th September, and the nominations were made the following day. The week following was marked by much heated discussion, but little definite achievement, and the preparations for active defence even hung fire. The need for a Committee of Public Safety was clearly established, because the classes which had nothing to lose began to accuse those who had of lukewarmness and Dutch sympathies. Even some of the members of the Committee of Five were under suspicion, and M. Gendebien in particular was charged with favouring a reconciliation with the Dutch Government. The recklessness of this statement may be judged from the fact that he was really in favour of a French alliance on any conditions. Perhaps some of these suspicions might be traced to the circumstance that negotiations were in more or less uninterrupted progress with the Dutch authorities during the whole of this period. On the very day that the Committee of Public Safety was appointed envoys were sent to Prince Frederick, with a request that he would continue to remain inactive, and to keep his troops at a distance from Brussels. The Prince, who had no sympathy with the Belgians, and who closely resembled his father in character, replied, briefly and firmly that he was a soldier, not a politician, and that he had only to obey the orders of the King.

On 14th September news began to reach Brussels of what was happening at The Hague. The text of the King's speech to the States General was circulated, and, after perusal, it was denounced as unsatisfactory, and as proving that no adequate concessions were to be expected from him ; where-

upon the crowd seized all the procurable copies of it and made a bonfire of them on the Grand Place. Still more indignation was aroused by the reports circulated to the effect that the Belgian members at The Hague were weakening in their opposition to the King, and showing a desire to end the troubles by accepting some compromise. The populace became more and more excited. The Committee of Five had a long sitting at the Hôtel de Ville, while outside the Grand Place was filled with an excited and boisterous mob. The Committee ended its deliberations by drafting a long letter to each separately, and all collectively, of the Belgian representatives at The Hague, calling upon them to return to Brussels without delay. When the members of the Committee left the Hôtel de Ville, the crowd raised cries testifying to their desire for an immediate rupture with the Dutch, and one among them angrily addressed M. Van de Weyer as he descended the steps as follows: "It is not words, but *du sang* [blood] we want."

"Yes," replied the diplomatist, "*du sens commun*" (common sense). Whereupon the mob laughed and cheered.

On the same day Charles Rogier founded at the Hôtel de la Paix his Central Club, which was a sort of rival institution to the Committee of Safety, and which was animated by far greater hostility to the Dutch. The Liège leader did not wish for any agreement with the Government of King William. He realised more clearly than any of the leaders of the movement that the time had come to strike a blow for Belgian freedom and independence. Still, while the Belgian representatives were at The Hague it was clearly not a case for pushing matters to extremities. Too uncompromising decisions at Brussels could only result in the imprisonment of the Belgian Deputies at The Hague, where popular passion ran almost as high as in the southern capital. The Hôtel de la Paix was so far in agreement with the Hôtel de Ville that it admitted the necessity of first recalling the Parliamentary representatives from the Dutch capital. So the chosen messengers sped on their way with the urgent letter of recall, and, thanks to the river steamer placed on the Beveland Canal by King William's enterprise, they reached The Hague on 16th September.

Their reception was not precisely what they expected, although "as a precaution" they had put the Orange colours in their button-holes. The attitude of the Dutch populace was menacing, and, although they most carefully guarded the secret object of their errand, the Belgians saw the risk they ran from its discovery.

What was a suspicion became a certainty after they had made communication of the letter of recall to one or two of the Belgian representatives. The first member to whom they spoke begged them to keep the purpose of their visit secret, or they would be torn to pieces by the Dutch, and in all probability their fate would be shared by all the Belgian legislators as well. The second member was more emphatic still, and did not confine himself to words. Having carefully read the letter of recall, he told the emissaries of the Committee of Safety to follow him, and, leading them to a jobmaster's house, he ordered a carriage with four horses, and, putting them inside, enjoined them to make their way back to Belgium as fast as they could, for if their presence and mission became known in The Hague, the lives of all of them were not worth half an hour's purchase. When the Belgian representative who treated his fellow-countrymen in this unceremonious manner reported the occurrence to the Prince of Orange, the Prince asked why the delegates had not been brought to him, as he would have taken them under his protection. The Belgian brusquely replied: "That would have been of no use, as you are just as much under suspicion as we are."

On 18th September the delegates were back in Brussels with the news of their flight, and the report that they had only succeeded in reading the letter of recall secretly to two of the representatives. Their report as to the excited state of Dutch opinion also seemed to dispel all hope of concessions or an amicable settlement. It was then that the Belgian leaders admitted the need of stronger measures, and M. Van de Weyer, taking M. Gendebien and Count Felix de Mérode aside in the Council Chamber of the Hôtel de Ville, concerted with them the secret formation of a Provisional Government. This step was taken on 18th September, but, as it was kept a close secret

between the three men, it produced no effect on public opinion.

The next four days were passed in a state of great commotion and uncertainty. The mass of the people, having nothing to lose, and ignorant of the military superiority of the Dutch, were all in favour of violent measures, and of proceeding without delay to an open repudiation of allegiance to King William. They saw in the caution of those who had much at stake, or who better realised the superiority of the Dutch forces, a treasonable attitude towards the nation, and they spoke freely in condemnation of all who did not echo their extreme opinions as Dutch sympathisers. Quarrels, disputes, and even rioting, were frequent during those four days, and it is not surprising that when Mr. G. Cartwright, Secretary of the British Legation, visited Brussels on 21st September for the purpose of ascertaining the state of popular opinion in that city, he returned to Prince Frederick's camp with the conviction that all respectable persons were in favour not merely of coming to terms with the Government, but of opening the gates to the Dutch troops for their own protection. There were, however, other and stronger forces at work than the desire for tranquillity and the fear of disorder among the upper classes.

The reply of the States General to the King's Address became known in Brussels on 21st September, and at the same time arrived an ultimatum from Prince Frederick, calling upon the Belgians to remove their rebel colours, and to open the city gates to the Dutch troops on the morning of the 23rd. By this time the King had definitely nominated Prince Frederick to the command of the troops which were to restore order in the Belgian provinces, and that Prince, not troubling himself in the least about the political side of the question, made all the preliminary arrangements to execute his orders with punctuality and success. In making those arrangements Prince Frederick was assisted by the experience of his Chief of the Staff, Baron Constant de Rebecque, who had filled the same post under the Prince of Orange at Waterloo.

The Dutch were altogether too fond of proclamations and

ultimatums. If, instead of proclaiming what they would do on 23rd September, they had boldly advanced on the 21st, they would have found Brussels in an almost defenceless state, and they could have recovered possession of it without much difficulty. Prince Frederick was undoubtedly misled as to the gravity of the task that lay before him by the report he received from Mr. Cartwright, of the British Legation. This gentleman, as already mentioned, visited Brussels during the morning of 21st September, and came to the conclusion that "all respectable persons were in favour of opening the gates to the troops." He made a report to this effect to the Prince. There is also no doubt that some prominent Brussels citizens, apprehensive of mob-law, did send messages inviting the Dutch to advance.

But, fortunately for the Belgian patriots, they proceeded in a more leisurely fashion. Two days are not long as a space of time, but in this case they enabled the citizens of Brussels to improvise some measures of defence, and also to summon aid from the other towns of Walloon Belgium. Every day a certain number of Belgian soldiers serving in the Dutch regiments came in, and thus the organisers of the national forces obtained the assistance of a small nucleus of trained men. The only uncertain feature in the political situation was the holding back of Flanders. Ghent and Antwerp made no sign.

Immediately on receipt of Prince Frederick's proclamation, on 21st September, Pletinckx took over the command of the levies, with the sanction of the Committee of Public Safety. Another retired officer, Van der Meere, was associated with him. Their first step was to send two delegates to Louvain to demand assistance. The next day was passed in strenuous exertion, and the defenders of Brussels were cheered in their efforts by the news that the citizens of Liége had captured the Chartreuse fort, and were laying siege to the citadel. Two hundred volunteers arrived from Louvain, and others came from various quarters to swell the ranks of the national force. Among them was Jenneval, the composer of the national air "La Brabançonne," who, like another Korner, supported his cause with song and sword. On this day—22nd September—

the Committee, thinking one commander better than two, nominated Pletinckx to act alone, and at the same meeting passed a resolution to resist the Dutch. A formal intimation of this intention was sent to Prince Frederick by two delegates. The Dutch commander, on their arrival, ordered their arrest, and sent them as prisoners to Antwerp. This extreme step showed the Belgians what treatment they might expect, unless they vindicated the justice of their cause by the stern and final arbitrament of arms.

On 23rd September, at dawn, the Dutch troops began the advance on Brussels. From their positions at Laeken and along the Willebroek Canal to Vilvorde they had four convenient lines of approach to as many gates in the wall of Brussels. These were, in their order from east to west, the Portes de Louvain, de Schaerbeek, de Laeken, and de Flandres. Prince Frederick decided to attack the whole of them, but with varying forces. The minor attacks on the Laeken and Flanders gates were repulsed. At the latter the Dutch, numbering 800 infantry, 300 cavalry, and four guns, under the command of Colonel Boekorven, lost 70 or 80 men, and were compelled to retire to the heights of Moelenbeck, more than a mile distant. But in the two principal attacks on the Schaerbeek and Louvain gates the Dutch were more fortunate—to the extent, at least, that they accomplished their first and immediate object of forcing an entrance into the town.

The Schaerbeek gate stood at the northern end of the long Rue Royale, with the Botanical Gardens lying immediately below it, outside the walls. Here the Dutch, numbering 7,000 men, and led by the Count de Bylandt, forced the barricades, and swept the Belgian defenders aside, part retiring on their comrades in the lower town, holding the Place d'Anvers and the Laeken gate, where the attack had not been serious, and the rest escaping to the barricade near the observatory on the Upper Boulevard. The Dutch then brought sixteen guns within the gate, and directed their converging fire down the long Rue Royale. Having thus cleared the way, as was thought, Bylandt placed himself at the head of the Grenadiers and a Chasseur regiment—a solid column 1,800 strong—and

charged down the street to secure what was expected to be a certain and easy victory.

The Dutch advanced with confidence and cheers. The brigade encountered no opposition until it reached the point of junction with the narrow streets of the Treurenberg and Louvain, where a formidable barricade had been constructed on the left or eastern side of the main street. Here fierce fighting took place; the Dutch advance was stopped, and Bylandt endeavoured to turn the Belgian flank by a movement towards the boulevard to the east of the Park. Some 150 of his men lost their way, became isolated, and had to surrender. The main body, leaving the Belgian barricades alone, forced a passage by the boulevard and the Rue Ducale into the Park. They met with no opposition in the Park itself, but when Bylandt endeavoured to leave it, so as to obtain possession of the Palace and the squares in front and at the side of it, he found fresh obstacles in his path. Here were assembled the volunteers from Namur and Tournai, the latter under Renaud, and a small body of those from Liége, led by Captain Pourbaix, who set up the flag of his contingent in the centre of the Place Royale. A formidable barricade closed admission to this place; the Bellevue Hôtel and the terraces of the houses in the Rue Royale were filled with volunteers, and at a spot commanding the chief gate out of the Park was a brass gun, pointed by Charlier of Liége, the wooden-legged gunner whose deeds are epic in the Belgian story of the great national upheaval. As the Dutch troops attempted to leave the Park they encountered the grape-shot of Charlier's gun at short range. Many fell before his bullets, among others Kramer, whose battery did such splendid service under Van der Smissen at Waterloo. Many more held back. The Dutch could not leave the Park.

The exact circumstances of Major Kramer's death, like most of the details of the confused street-fighting, are given differently by different writers. Colonel Huybrecht, whose account is the clearest and most concise, states that Major Kramer de Bichin, one of the most gallant officers in the Dutch service, galloped ahead of Bylandt's infantry in the dash down the

Rue Royale with two guns of horse artillery. He seems to have passed the Treurenberg barricade without drawing fire, and to have almost reached the end of the Park near the Palace, where, before he could turn his guns, he received a fierce fusillade from the barricade on the Place Royale. Kramer was severely wounded, several of his men were killed, and the rest, turning to the left, sought shelter in the Royal Palace for their guns, their wounded officer, and themselves. Kramer died an hour or two later in one of the rooms of the Palace, and eventually the artillerymen, after the occupation of the Park, rejoined Bylandt's corps.

The second episode of the first day's fighting was the forcing of the Louvain gate by Major-General Tripp—distinguished from his father of Waterloo fame as Tripp the Younger—at the head of two regiments of cavalry. The plan was that this body was to make its way down the Rue de Louvain, across the Rue Royale, and to proceed straight for the headquarters of the acting Committee on the Grand Place. The cavalry, however, were promptly brought to a halt by the barricades in the Rue de Louvain, and after some saddles had been emptied, Tripp led his men off at a gallop to the open space on the boulevard near the Porte de Namur, where the cavalry dismounted and awaited the course of events. Some time later Tripp learnt of the occupation of the Park by the infantry, and communications were established between the two detached bodies by mounted patrols. But in order to prevent the Belgians from Ixelles and the southern outlying districts from surrounding the Park, the cavalry encamped near the Namur gate, and patrolled the boulevard.

One of the minor incidents of the day was the setting fire by the Dutch to the Annonciades barracks. This occurred during the rush of the Dutch after their repulse at the Treurenberg by the side streets into the Park. The rumour spread that the vaults of these barracks were full of gunpowder, whereupon the people, including women and children, hastened to the place to help in extinguishing the fire before an explosion should occur, and in this they were fortunately successful. So ended the first day's fighting in Brussels on

23rd September. The Dutch had certainly got into the town, but it was perfectly clear that if the Belgians continued to display the same courage, they would very soon wish themselves well out of it. When night fell the Dutch held only the Park, the Porte de Schaerbeek, and the Porte de Namur, as the Belgians had reoccupied the Louvain gate after Tripp's cavalry had ridden through it.

Considerable as the success achieved by the Belgians on 23rd September, as viewed in the light of subsequent events, appears to us, the impression at the moment in the town itself was far from being equally favourable. The prevalent opinion was based on the palpable fact that the Dutch army had made its way into the capital, and not on the plausible, and possibly deceptive, conclusion that by its success it had only got itself into a trap. Many—indeed all—of the Belgian leaders whose names have figured so prominently in the ventilation of Belgian grievances up to this point thought that the game was up. Some of the most prominent even left Brussels; and as they fled from the capital the noise of the cannon and the smoke and flame of burning houses seemed to confirm their fears. Even Rogier came to the conclusion that Brussels, if not the cause, was lost. While several efforts were made in the evening of the 23rd and the early hours of the 24th to arrange a compromise with the Dutch, and to stop the useless effusion of blood, Rogier and Gendebien hastened to Charleroi, with the view of organising fresh means of resistance in the provinces. De Potter came from Valenciennes, where he had established his residence, to Charleroi, in order to consult with them on the situation; and after their interview Rogier and Gendebien returned in the direction of Brussels, but with the intention of making their way to Namur. During the afternoon of the 24th, when they were not far from Waterloo, the sound of cannon reached their ears, and when they had made sure of the fact, they exclaimed: "What! Brussels still holds out? Then we must go there, too!"

This was not the only incident that lay somewhat outside the main current of events. In the evening of the 23rd Prince Frederick sent Colonel Gumöens, an officer of his staff, to invite

the Belgians to desist from further resistance, and to return to their allegiance. This officer, although carrying the white flag, was dragged from his horse and nearly killed by the crowd. Rescued by a Belgian officer, he was taken to the Hôtel de Ville, where, after some discussion, Baron d'Hooghvorst agreed to accompany him back to Prince Frederick's quarters. Unfortunately, Prince Frederick inferred from the presence of the Belgian leader that his fellow-citizens were *in extremis*, and his conditions rose in like proportion. Instead of proposing some compromise, he demanded a capitulation. D'Hooghvorst returned to the Hôtel de Ville without having done any good, and the Dutch Prince again took a sanguine view of the situation, about which he had been rather despondent.

On the 24th fighting, more or less severe, continued throughout the day, but it left the position practically unchanged. The Dutch were deliberating as to what they should do, and bringing reinforcements into the Park from Schaerbeek. They were also waiting for the arrival of the second army, under General Kurt Heyligers, which was supposed to be marching on Brussels from Tirlemont.

On the Belgian side, while there was a great deal of activity, there was a marked absence of cohesion and organisation. Individuals acted as they thought best in attacking the Dutch in the Park, and without obeying regular orders. Someone, in describing the incidents of the day, said that the leaders were conspicuous by their absence, but the citizens continued to fire whenever they saw a Dutch uniform. In this way Prince Frederick's force suffered considerably ; but whenever the Belgians assumed the offensive the regular troops easily repulsed them. Thus, although more than one encouraging piece of news reached the Belgians from outside, the need of skilful leading was very evident, and this defect kept the final issue in suspense. During the day it was reported that both at Louvain and at Tirlemont the Dutch had been repulsed in attempts to recover possession of those places. Reinforcements also arrived at Brussels in dribblets from the towns in the south, so that all casualties were more than made good by the fresh levies ; while the losses experienced by the Dutch



BARON E. D'HOOGHVORST.



could not be filled up, and those among the soldiers in the Park were far from light.

The more significant incidents of 24th September, however, took place away from the fighting-line. The Council Chamber at the Hôtel de Ville was the scene of some important discussions and some important decisions. The Committee of Public Safety, which dated from the events of 8th-9th September, had done its work. It was superseded on the 24th by the Provisional Government, which on that day came into existence. At its foundation it was composed of five members only. They were D'Hooghvorst, Rogier, Joly, De Coppin, and Vanderlinden. As none of the three men who on 18th September, in anticipation of eventualities, had formed in secret a Provisional Government, were on the list, it may be stated at once that on the 25th they publicly joined this body, which accepted the responsibility of the administration. They were Felix de Mérode, Van de Weyer, and Gendebien. Nicolai joined at the same time, so that this working Commission consisted of nine members.

The first act of the Commission, on 24th September, was to transfer the military command from M. Pletinckx to Don Juan van Haelen, a Flemish officer who had gained some military experience in Spain and elsewhere. This change did not imply any reflection on M. Pletinckx, but only that, a more experienced officer being available, the Government thought it right to avail themselves of his services. Perhaps they were the more impelled to make this change by a rumour that reached them during their deliberations to the effect that Prince Frederick contemplated bombarding the city with mortar fire from his batteries at Schaerbeek, somewhat after the example of Villeroy in the old wars. Several rounds were, indeed, fired from these batteries, but the Dutch desisted on discovering that they were more likely to exhaust their ammunition than to seriously damage the town.

The circumstances attending this change in the command call for a little more consideration. A few hours after Rogier's return from the south he, Joly, and D'Hooghvorst, met in anxious consultation at the Hôtel de Ville. It was clear to

them that a single military chief was demanded, and they then remembered that Van Haelen, who had signalised himself as a private during the two days' fighting at the barricades, was an officer of some experience who had served with distinction as aide-de-camp to General Mina. They accordingly sent for him, and offered him the command. After some hesitation he accepted it, but only on the condition that the three members of the Government who signed his appointment would swear to him that they would not leave the Hôtel de Ville. Having received this assurance, he took over the command, and on taking his leave he exclaimed: "Have no fears; I will protect you!"

Van Haelen then proceeded to the hotel of the Prince de Chimay on the Montagne du Parc, where he established his headquarters, and his first act was to issue a spirited address to the citizens to resist to the death, as he had been informed that the Dutch commander had incited his soldiers with a promise that Brussels should be given over to them to pillage. Whether true or not, this had the desired effect in stimulating the courage of the Brussels citizens. Those who had held back now came forward to defend their hearths and homes.

The struggle was resumed with increased vigour on 25th September. At daybreak the Dutch, hoping to catch the small garrison off its guard, made a sudden attack on the Hôtel Bellevue, which commanded the entrance to the Place Royale, and overlooked the park. Although there were only five men on guard, they succeeded in repulsing the attack, and killed several of the assailants. Fighting continued throughout the day around the Park, but neither side could do more than hold its own. Some of the Belgians, flushed with what they considered their success, wished to assume the offensive, and called upon their companions to attack the Park. A small band even broke through the palings, but very few returned. Later on in the day Van Haelen himself organised a column of attack on the Place Royale to carry the Park by assault, but, although preceded by several discharges from Charlier's gun, this attempt was defeated with some loss. All that the Dutch could do, however, was to hold the ground on which

they stood, and this was the more remarkable because the reinforcements moved up from Schaerbeek had enabled them to occupy the Royal Palace and the Prince of Orange's Palace.

The Park was not the only scene of combat on this day. Tripp was hotly engaged on the boulevard. The volunteers from Ixelles pressed him hard at the Porte de Namur, other bands from the Porte de Hal assailed him on the boulevard of Waterloo and in the garden of the Palace of the Duke d'Arenberg. His cavalry had been reinforced by a regiment of infantry and a battery of Horse Artillery, but he was unable to do more than maintain his position. It was quite impossible for him to make any movement against the Place Royale, down the Rue de Namur, as had been intended. As the day wore on, too, the numbers and confidence of his assailants steadily rose.

By this time the confidence of the Dutch was rudely shaken. They had lost many killed, and hundreds of wounded had been sent back to Vilvorde. Some pessimists even declared that half the army was gone. Under these circumstances Prince Frederick determined to make a strenuous attack on the 26th, but he had not reckoned on the greatly increased numbers of the Belgian forces, and on the improvement of their position. While the Dutch fire had considerably damaged the barricade in the Rue de Louvain the barricade on the Place Royale had been strengthened, and the Hôtel Bellevue and the houses facing the Park in the Rue Royale had been converted into miniature forts.

A curious and little-known incident occurred during the afternoon of the 25th which threw a strong light on the state of semi-demoralisation that was beginning to infect the Dutch commanders. Baron Gagern, an officer of the staff, arrived from Ghent, where he reported that the situation was dubious, and in an interview with Prince Frederick he dwelt on the great need there, as General Ghigny was too weak, for "a good General." The Prince, very much cast down, exclaimed: "A good General! Where is one wanted more than here?" and Baron Constant de Rebecque repeated the words. The latter pressed Baron Gagern to say whether he knew of any

general officer who would lead an infantry attack without flinching, and after some hesitation he replied that there was only Duke Bernard of Saxe-Weimar, whose courage was beyond question. Both the Prince and Constant de Rebecque exclaimed: "Return to Ghent as fast as you can and send him here. He shall have command of the infantry." To conclude the episode, it may be stated that Duke Bernard did not reach Vilvorde till the morning of the 27th, when he learnt that the Dutch army was retreating.

Even without the needed "good General," Prince Frederick resolved to make a great effort on the 26th September to obtain some success, and as evidence of the bitter feeling prevailing among the Dutch, it may be mentioned that when, during the morning, Pletinckx went forward with a white flag from the Annonciades barracks he was arrested and sent off as a prisoner to Antwerp. During the evening of the 25th several hundred fresh volunteers arrived from Hal, Havré, and other places in Brabant, and among them was a M. Lescaille, a sportsman and a crack shot. He took up his post on the roof of the Hôtel Bellevue, and two of his friends loaded his rifle while he fired. It was credibly reported at the time that no fewer than twenty Dutch Grenadiers fell to his gun alone during the day.

The fighting during the whole of this Sunday was more severe and sustained than it had been since the 23rd, and the losses were the heaviest of all the four days' fighting. At least 600 Dutch and 200 Belgians were killed. When the firing ceased with sunset it was clear that the Belgians had obtained a considerable advantage. Tripp's force had been pressed back towards the Rue Ducale and the Boulevard du Regent; the garrison in the Park had suffered heavily, and the troops were thoroughly discouraged at being unable to get out of the trap into which they had put themselves. Ammunition was low, provisions were almost completely lacking, and it was clear that nothing but a timely retreat, or the arrival of General Kurt Heyligers, with his fresh corps of 8,000 men, could save the force. But they had been waiting for that officer for three whole days, and as he had not come

it did not seem prudent to wait any longer, so at a midnight council Prince Frederick gave the order to his army to retreat.

The Brussels citizens and their allies from the provinces had fought very well at the barricades, but they had not acquired the military habit of sustained vigilance which makes soldiering a profession. As soon as the fighting of the day had ceased, and the Dutch fires for the supper were lit in the Park and on the boulevard the citizens began to quit their posts and return to their homes, where the welcome of their family and a hot repast awaited them. Very few remained on guard. On one occasion Van Haelen declared that between his headquarters and the Dutch sentries there was not a single man on guard. The Dutch during the four days' struggle had failed to take advantage of this remissness, but at last they were to derive some benefit from it.

When the fighting closed on the evening of 26th September the Belgians had no idea that the struggle in that place, and for the time being, was over. They looked forward to the renewal of the contest with the rising of the sun, and, exhausted by their efforts, they slept well. At four in the morning, two hours before sunrise, the Dutch troops, having sent off their wounded in carts to Vilvorde during the evening, evacuated the Park, and without the least molestation quitted Brussels. The withdrawal was effected in perfect order and absolute silence. The Belgians had not the slightest inkling as to what had occurred. When the citizens resumed their posts in the fighting line there was nothing unusual in the aspect of the Park, but when after an hour or two no shot or sound came from it, suspicions arose, and a few venturesome spirits crept forward to learn the cause. They reached the trenches or pits which the Dutch had dug for shelter, and, finding them empty, rushed back, raising a great shout that the Dutch were gone. The Dutch were not merely gone. They had escaped from the city without the loss of a single man during their retreat.

So ended the four days' struggle in the streets of Brussels. At a moderate computation the Dutch lost 1,500 killed, and the Belgians between 600 and 700, whilst the number wounded

on both sides was very much larger. Six hundred Belgians were buried in the square which was afterwards given the name of the Place des Martyrs. With the single exception of the fighting in Paris during the Commune, forty years later, this episode is the most remarkable piece of street fighting to be found in history, and it is not the less remarkable because, unlike all others, the citizen forces proved more than a match for the regular troops. But the successful fighting in Brussels alone did not achieve Belgian independence. A long and bitter struggle lies ahead of the Provisional Government. Brussels has set the example of revolution, and has won the first success in the effort for independence. To the most sanguine the final issue even then could not but appear very uncertain.

The result, so far as Brussels itself was concerned, might well have been different if the Dutch had managed their enterprise better. The need of "a good General" was evident even to themselves as soon as they realised that the Belgians were not to be scattered by a charge of cavalry and a few volleys. But at least Prince Frederick should have timed his attack so as to allow of the arrival of all his troops. The marches and countermarches of Kurt Heyligers and his 8,000 men recalled the still more famous wanderings of Grouchy on the day of Waterloo; and his appearance at Vilvorde on 27th September, after Prince Frederick's force had marched through it, almost coincided with the arrival there of Bernard of Saxe-Weimar, the supposed "good General" whom fortune robbed of the chance of making or marring his military reputation in the streets of Brussels.*

Having obtained what was a considerable, if not a decisive, success, the Belgians celebrated it by an act of public gratitude very much to their credit. In the moment of their elation they did not forget the man who had first stood up in their name to warn and then denounce King William, and who had been driven into exile by his decree. Louis de Potter was at Valenciennes; on the 24th he had met Rogier at Charleroi,

* The reader will remember that Duke Bernard did exceedingly well at Quatre Bras.

but he had returned after their brief interview to the French town. In the morning of the 27th an express was sent inviting him in the name of the Provisional Government and the Belgian nation to return to his home. He set off at once, relays of horses were placed to draw his carriage, and his journey was a triumphant procession. He was hailed everywhere by the title of "the Belgian La Fayette," and on reaching Brussels 20,000 volunteers escorted him to the Hôtel de Ville, where the members of the Provisional Government received him in a body. Their first act at the ensuing sitting was to elect De Potter to a seat in their Council, and every one felt that the returned exile had been the real instigator of the revolutionary movement which others had brought so far on the road to a successful result. When the news of De Potter's* return reached King William he must have remembered some of the warnings he had received from him, but it did not induce him to pause. His reply was given, as will be seen, on 5th October, when he called the Dutch people to arms and ordered a *levée en masse*.

* Although his later career did not fulfil the expectations that might have been, and, indeed, were, held of De Potter's political future, we cannot agree with M. Armand Freson (*Souvenirs de Joseph Lebeau*) that he was merely a *détraqué*, or crackbrain. He was a very clever journalist, and when fame and position were thrust upon him he proved a very poor statesman. That was all.

CHAPTER V.

The New Constitution.

THE expulsion of the Dutch from Brussels and the retreat of Prince Frederick's severely tried and much weakened army to Malines produced immense elation in Belgian patriotic circles, where the hopeful conviction spread that the worst of the struggle was over and that the battle of independence had been fully if not finally won. The events of the few weeks immediately following the evacuation of the Park by the Dutch troops were indeed of a nature to strengthen this optimism, for they seemed to indicate that the Belgian people would carry everything before them, and that the Dutch Government could offer but a feeble opposition. The sequel will show that these hopes were exaggerated and unreasonable, that a long and dubious struggle rather than an easy triumph awaited the Belgian people, and that more than once the true patriots had cause to doubt whether the result of their efforts might not be a return to the same or even a worse state of things than had existed under King William.

But for the few weeks following the triumph of Brussels there came tidings from all sides of Belgian successes and Dutch reverses. The citadel of Liège surrendered on 4th October, after a relieving force from Tongres had been defeated and driven back; Ostend and its arsenal were in the hands of the patriots; the Dutch garrisons evacuated the forts at Mons, Charleroi, and Namur almost without a shot being fired; and finally the brother race of Flanders, shaking off its apathy, had risen, and ended almost without a blow the Dutch Administration, with which it had been falsely suspected of feeling sympathy. At Ghent, where the Orange

party was strongest, the garrison was attacked by 800 volunteers from Brussels early in October, and compelled to take shelter in the citadel. On 18th October it evacuated the place, and retreated to Antwerp. At Bruges the collapse of Dutch authority had been still more rapid. On 26th September the Dutch troops fired on a crowd on the Grand Place for waving the national flag, but such a storm of popular indignation was aroused by the outrage that the next morning the garrison withdrew hurriedly to Ostend, and on the following day Ostend itself surrendered, as already mentioned. At Tirlemont the townspeople had recourse to an artifice. They displayed on the walls a large number of butter-barrels, which the Dutch took for casks of ammunition, and, thinking the town well prepared, they refrained from attack and passed on. The whole Dutch system in the Southern Netherlands had crumbled away at the first challenge, and a few weeks after Prince Frederick's retirement there remained subject to King William's authority only the fortresses of Luxembourg in the far south, Maestricht in the east, and Antwerp in the north. The city of Antwerp, it is true, formed part of the fortress, and for some weeks longer than the other Belgian cities it was under the guard and flag of the House of Orange. But the citizens were sullen and defiant, the Dutch commanders had no desire for any more street fighting, and it was no secret that the people of Antwerp would rise like those of Brussels and Liège as soon as the fate of the corps commanded by Duke Bernard of Saxe-Weimar outside the walls had been decided. An interval of four weeks of suspense and strained relations separated the emancipation, under tragic circumstances still to be related, of the famous city on the Scheldt from that of the capital.

One pathetic incident claims brief mention. It was decided to give those who had fallen in defence of Brussels a public funeral and a common burial-place. The site selected was the Place St. Michel, a name changed thereafter to the Place des Martyrs.

Six hundred citizens, who had fallen during the four days' fighting in and around the Park, were interred on the spot, and

a permanent memorial was decreed in the form of a monument which should bear the names of all the fallen. Jenneval, poet and actor, whose spirited verses, entitled the "Brabançonne," became, and have remained, the National Anthem of Belgium, contributed an impromptu epitaph, which is graven on the wall of the monument, and reads :

" Qui dort sous ce tombeau couvert par la Victoire
Des nobles attributs de l'Immortalité ?
De simples citoyens dont un mot dit l'histoire—
Morts pour la Liberté !"

The anniversary of this State interment has been, and so long as the Belgian State and the memory of noble deeds shall endure will be, celebrated with much solemnity, and whilst there were any survivors the men who had taken part in those events were present to pay their tribute to the fallen comrades of long ago and to receive the respectful homage of the younger generation, whose independence was due to their efforts.

In order to appreciate the proceedings of the Provisional Government, which was confronted with one of the most difficult problems that ever fell to the lot of legislators, it is necessary to take into account the prevailing sentiments of the day, and to remember that its first decisions were made in an atmosphere of optimistic confidence that nothing more remained than to draft on paper the Constitution under which the Belgian nation was henceforth to exist. The seemingly complete collapse of Dutch authority had inspired the Belgian leaders, or at least the majority of them, with absolute confidence as to the security of their own position, and those few who expressed doubts on the subject were accused of Orange sympathies or of being traitors. If the truth must be told, the street and barricade fighting in Brussels had produced an entirely false impression in the minds of civilians unacquainted with the real conditions of war, and thus a sense of elation and triumph arose for which there was no sound justification.

It was while such views prevailed that the first acts of the Provisional Government were taken, and they explain the extraordinary confidence and calm with which the Belgians grappled with the weighty problems in diplomacy as well as

legislation that confronted them on the morrow of their own declaration of independence. For the moment they thought as little of the opinion of the Powers as of the preponderant military forces of Holland, which had been badly handled and frittered away in the first phase of the struggle, but which in the end would have to be seriously reckoned with. While Europe thought rather slightly of the Belgians, who for centuries had hidden their national virtues under alien rule, the Belgians themselves had no such diffidence. They deemed themselves not merely capable of self-government, but also of drafting a Constitution that should be perfect for their own needs and a model for others.

The Provisional Government, formed on 26th September, after the retreat of the Dutch, was composed of the following seven members : Baron d'Hooghvorst, Charles Rogier, Count Felix de Mérode, A. Gendebien, Sylvain Van de Weyer, Joly, and De Potter, the last named having been added on 28th September. In addition, there were two secretaries, J. Nicolay and F. de Coppin, and a treasurer, J. Vanderlinden. These men, united in patriotic ardour, had different political ideals. Some were even in favour of a Republic, and De Potter was very much maligned if he did not cherish the hope of being its first President. Although ten men are not many, the number, considering the difference in their views on the political situation, was sufficiently great to threaten delays and difficulties where everything depended on promptitude and solidarity. Impressed by this consideration, the Provisional Government delegated its powers to a Central or Executive Committee of four members and one secretary. The members were Rogier, Van de Weyer, De Mérode, and De Potter. M. Gendebien was also nominated, but being entrusted with a diplomatic mission to Paris, the capital decisions of the Central Committee were made in his absence, and do not bear his signature. M. Vanderlinden, the treasurer to the Government, acted as secretary to the Committee.

The Committee was charged in the first place with the task of formulating the measures required to give legality to the acts of the Provisional Government and to prepare the way for

its permanent successor. For it must be remembered that, while the Dutch Administration had been repudiated and overthrown, nothing had been erected in its stead. Nominated on 30th September, the Committee issued four days later the Decree which was the notification to Europe that the modern State of Belgium had come into existence. The following is the translation of this important document :

The Provisional Government, considering it necessary to fix the future State of Belgium, directs that—

Art. I.—The provinces of Belgium detached by force from Holland shall constitute an *Independent State*.

Art. II.—The Central Committee will occupy itself as soon as possible with the draft Bill (projet) of a Constitution.

Art. III.—A National Congress representing all the interests of the provinces shall be convoked. It will examine the Bill drafted for a Belgian Constitution, modify it as it thinks proper, and will make it as the definitive Constitution of force throughout Belgium.

The members of the Central Committee :

DE POTTER, CH. ROGIER, SYLVAIN VAN DE WEYER,
COUNT FELIX DE MÉRODE.

By order :

(*The Secretary*) J. VANDERLINDEN.

BRUSSELS, 4th October, 1830.

The decisions set forth in this Decree were really of the first importance and epoch-making. For the first time in history there was to be an independent State separately and distinctively known as Belgium, from the name of the Nervian canton in Belgic Gaul. A new era had opened for this very ancient community which, even under titular foreign masters, had nevertheless asserted its individual genius in every department of human activity and art. But a mere declaration of intention did not suffice ; a distinct and durable edifice had to be constructed and a Constitution framed in the 19th century. A popular Government, whose power rested on the will of the people, had no choice save to declare that this Constitution must be submitted to and approved by the people assembled in a solemn National Congress. That was the pith of the Decree that has just been quoted.

The Committee had decided the general purport of the task that lay before the country, but there remained one vital

principle to be established before it could even commence the outline of a Belgian Constitution. The declaration that Belgium was to be an "independent State" was very good as far as it went, but it carried with it the second question, which could not be evaded—What form of State? Briefly put, Was the new Belgium to be a Monarchy or a Republic? There had been a great deal of loose and irresponsible talk about a Belgian Republic, and it may be presumed that the idea met with some favour because there was no national dynasty to place on the throne. Some ambitious men like De Potter aspired to the Presidency, and others in the community, dreading De Potter's advanced views, wished to press the superior claims of De Mérode, a strict Catholic and high-minded gentleman, seeking nothing for himself, and inclined by the tradition of his family to welcome an Austrian restoration if by any means the House of Burgundy and Hapsburg could have been revived.

Thanks to their literary activity and influence, the Belgian Republicans made a good deal of stir in 1830, but their hold on the public was very slight. They were expressing their own opinions, and not those of the community at large. The most prominent and influential of the Republicans was, of course, De Potter, who, on 31st October—that is to say, on the eve of the assembly of the National Congress—published what he called a *Programme of Political Faith*, in which he strongly advocated the election of a President for a term of either three or five years. His proposal would have had more force if it had not been an open secret that he considered his claim to be first President beyond challenge.

The events of July, 1830, had given France not a Republic, but a Constitutional Monarchy, and as the French influence was paramount in Belgium for the moment, it was impossible to ignore her example. Enthusiastic as some of the Belgian leaders were in the pursuit of the ideal, there were limits to their zeal and indiscretion, or rather to the tolerance that their less visionary colleagues would show to schemes that threatened to wreck the barque of State which had only just been launched on a stormy sea. The mere fact that some of the

leaders had Republican longings, secret or avowed, was an imperative reason for a prompt decision in the opposite sense to be come to. It was declared by successive speakers in the body of the Committee that, while the drafting of a Constitution required time, a decision as to the form of the Government for which it had to be prescribed could be come to without delay, and that all the circumstances of the hour called for a prompt and irrevocable declaration.

These considerations prevailed, but the Provisional Government, thinking that the small Central Committee of its own members was too restricted for so important a decision, created on 6th October a new Commission specially charged with the task of drafting a Constitution. This Commission was composed of men outside the ranks of the Government, and as several of its members played a considerable part in later events, their names may be given. The President was Baron de Gerlache, and the Vice-President M. Van Meenen, the advocate who had taken part in the De Potter and other trials. The secretary was M. Nothomb, and among the remaining nine members were MM. Lebeau, Tielemans, Devaux, and Charles de Brouckère. This Commission decided on 12th October, by a majority of eight to one, that the form of Government should be monarchical, hereditary, and representative—in other words, that the new Kingdom of Belgium should be a Constitutional Monarchy.

The one dissident was M. Tielemans, the friend and fellow-exile of De Potter, who voted for a Republic, over which his former colleague aspired to preside. But the extraordinary popularity of De Potter was already on the wane. The most caustic critic of the Dutch régime did not prove himself a capable man of affairs, and his personal designs laid him open to suspicion. His high-handed treatment, too, of Van Haelen, the officer who had held command in Brussels under trying circumstances, was not calculated to give him a reputation for moderation, and the honourable acquittal of that officer, after having been summarily dismissed and arrested, recoiled on the man who seemed to have abused his power for the sake of his personal feelings. The waning of De Potter's

influence, which declined as rapidly as it rose, was evidence also of the slight hold that republicanism had established on the mind of the Belgian nation in 1830.

Before dealing with the discussion in the National Congress and the drafting of the Constitution submitted to its approval, it will be convenient at this point to describe the concluding incidents of what may be called the campaign of 1830. If the sober and sedate legislators in Brussels felt confidence in the situation and dreamt not of danger after the retreat of the Dutch troops, nothing less than a martial elation inflamed the young volunteers and patriots in the field. Since the withdrawal from the Park only the backs of the Dutch soldiers had been seen, and the young men of the country were not content with such tame successes, but wished to demonstrate their patriotism by some striking military exploit.

By this time a certain number of professional soldiers had been attracted to the Belgian forces. A Parisian legion had been formed out of Belgians resident in Paris. A large number also of the Belgians serving in the Dutch army deserted, and several veterans who had fought under the Emperor Napoleon, exiled Frenchmen as well as retired Belgians, came out of their retreat and offered their services. Among the former were Major-General Nypels, who was entrusted with the command of the field army operating towards Antwerp, and Niellon and Mellinet, who acted as his brigadiers. Of these, Niellon, it may be interpolated, displayed throughout the campaigns of 1830 and 1831 no slight skill as a tactician. The national forces under the leaders named were then intent on expelling the Dutch from Antwerp, but even the most confident saw that it would be a task of marked difficulty and no little danger. The course of events evidently depended on the action of the citizens of Antwerp, and for some weeks it remained uncertain whether they were swayed by Orange sympathies or the patriotic sentiments that had carried before them everything outside the ramparts of their city.

There was a lull of three weeks, and then events were precipitated in the manner now to be described. On 4th October, King William ordered a *levée en masse*. That step foreshadowed

an appeal to force, but a few days earlier he had sanctioned the return of the Prince of Orange to Belgium on his expressing the conviction that he could yet save the situation by pacific means. At The Hague it was now admitted that the separation of the Administrations was inevitable, but the hope was entertained that the dynastic hold on the Southern Provinces might still be retained, despite all that had happened, through the personal influence of the Prince of Orange. For the moment, too, the Prince, so far as Dutch opinion went, had a favourable opportunity. The military party was undoubtedly discouraged by the Brussels failure. The military chiefs were also in disagreement among themselves, and none had a plan, if it were not Chassé, whose methods in the end served but to embitter the situation. From the Dutch point of view, then, a pacific settlement at this eleventh hour was very much to be desired, and seemed far from improbable. But in Belgian quarters there was no response. There had been a time when independence under a Prince of Orange would have been hailed with acclamation, at least at Brussels and in Flanders, but now any connection with the Nassau family seemed only to detract from the completeness of Belgium's national independence.

On 4th October the Prince of Orange arrived in Antwerp having in his pocket his father's appointment as Governor of the Southern Provinces, and on the same day Prince Frederick, who was much cast down by his failure, departed, after an affecting interview with his brother, for Rotterdam. Negotiations were then reopened with the Belgian leaders, and a delegation of moderate men, including D'Hooghvorst, came to Antwerp to discuss matters anew with the Prince. At this moment no decision had been come to at Brussels as to the form of Government to be adopted. There was some slight justification then for those who allowed their Orange sympathies to persuade them that the Prince might be accepted as Governor or Viceroy. But the negotiations did not progress as their promoters hoped. The Belgians brought into contact with the Prince of Orange were sanguine of a favourable result in accordance with their wishes, but the great body of

the leaders in Brussels held aloof, and were unsympathetic, and from day to day the conditions changed in a sense adverse to the Prince's chances.

The Prince of Orange saw that his only hope of success lay in propitiating Belgian opinion, and he was prepared to go to almost any length to attain his object. He declared himself a Belgian, but the response was equivocal. He declared himself ready to act for Belgium, even against his father. The only answer given to these declarations was, "Let him, then, come to Brussels and take his chance with the rest of us." It required only ordinary shrewdness to see the self-contradiction in his statements. If he was Governor of the Southern Provinces by a Nassau Decree he could not be a Belgian citizen, and if he were a Belgian—the citizen of a State declared to be independent of Holland—he could in no sense be King William's Viceroy at Brussels.

The Prince of Orange's efforts to make himself acceptable to the Belgian people—for imperceptibly he had been led on to sacrifice his dignity to that extent—did not elicit any sympathy on their side. The Belgians did not hide their belief that they had won the victory, and that it was for them to name the terms of any arrangement. Nor did they delay in expressing their views. On 16th October, having four days before declared in favour of a Monarchy, they laid down as a kind of ultimatum before continuing the discussion with the Prince of Orange that Antwerp should be evacuated, and that all the Dutch troops should retire behind the Moerdyck. The Prince made one final attempt to compromise, and then, reluctantly admitting that times had changed and his influence departed, he withdrew from Antwerp on 25th October, washing his hands of the whole affair, and leaving the Belgians for that moment to work out their own destiny without his aid or intervention.

Some days before the Prince's departure it had become clear that hostilities were about to be resumed. The Dutch outposts were driven across the Rupel on 19th October, and the Nethe on the 21st. In the former fighting Jenneval, the poet-actor, was killed near Lierre. His family name was the

Chevalier Louis Dechez, although he is best known under his stage pseudonym. Full of enthusiasm and without fear, when he was killed he was pursuing the Dutch as they retreated almost alone, being far ahead of his comrades; he was typical of the Belgians of 1830, whose patriotism had long slumbered under foreign masters. On the second occasion 300 Belgians attacked a large Dutch force at Waelhem, where the bridge over the Nethe was captured in gallant style. The fight was marked by one striking incident. One of the corps, called the "Chasseurs Volontaires Bourgeois de Bruxelles," at the beginning of the fight rushed on the bridge, fixed the flag just presented to the regiment by the ladies of Chasteler half-way across, and called on his companions not to let it fall into the enemy's hands. This flag, pierced and torn by the Dutch shot, is still preserved in the Brussels Communal Museum, and is brought out once a year on the occasion of the procession to the Place des Martyrs.

Much alarmed as to the position of affairs, General Chassé declared Antwerp to be in a state of siege on 24th October. The following day the Dutch rearguard, as it was called, under the command of Duke Bernard of Saxe-Weimar, was attacked in its position at Berchem, then a village outside the *enceinte* of Antwerp, but now part of the city. A sharp fight, known as the Battle of Berchem, was fought there (25th October), and once more the Belgians were so successful that they drove the Dutch off the field into the city.

The victory was not achieved without loss. Count Frederic de Mérode, a younger brother of the member of the Provisional Government, was severely wounded, and died some days later after amputation at Malines. His name remains prominent among the legendary heroes of the Belgian Revolution. He was resident in France in his wife's (Countess de Cluzal) château on the Loire when the summons to serve his country reached him. Leaving his wife and children, he hastened to obey the call, falling in his first engagement. De Mérode was buried in the cemetery of the Church of St. Willebrord at Berchem, where a monument in black marble was erected to his memory by his brother. Jenneval, more fortunate, perhaps,



COUNT FRÉDÉRIC DE MÉRODE.



found a resting-place in Brussels among the citizens whose epitaph he had provided. His fame, too, is preserved in the following lines added by his brother to the "Brabançonne" :

" Ouvrez vos rangs, ombres des braves !
 Il vient, celui qui vous disait :
 ' Plutôt mourir que vivre esclaves !'
 Et comme il disait il faisait.
 Ouvrez vos rangs, noble phalange,
 Place au poète, au chasseur redouté !
 Il vient dormir, loin de l'Orange,
 Sous l'arbre de la Liberté !"

On 26th October the Belgians secured several positions close to the *enceinte*, and got into touch with those of the citizens who sympathised with them. Early in the morning of 27th October the latter opened two of the gates—the Porte Rouge and the Borgerhout gate—and the Belgian volunteers passed in. The Dutch troops retired on the citadel, their main position bordering the Scheldt. A peremptory demand for its surrender followed, and to this General Chassé gave an equally peremptory refusal.

A lull ensued, and no one knew exactly what next to expect. The confusion was incredible. The Belgian leaders had no plan for the attack on a strong fortress garrisoned by 5,000 regular troops. Even if they had a plan, their followers were so out of hand that they could not have got them to execute it. This may be judged from the fact that even while the *parlementaire* with the white flag was requesting General Chassé to surrender, firing continued, and it is quite possible, as the Dutch alleged, that the Antwerp citizens, who had swelled the Belgian force, and who, unaccustomed to firearms, thought, on receiving them, of nothing but making use of them, broke the strict usages of warfare. General Chassé took advantage of this technical breach to give orders for the bombardment of the city, but the promptitude with which his order was given and obeyed raised a suspicion at the time that he had fixed on this plan in his own mind long before any excuse for its execution existed, and no subsequent explanation or testimony has availed to shake the conclusion. The destruction of Antwerp was to atone for much

military failure, and to restore the reputation of the Dutch army.

At 3.30 in the afternoon of 27th October, then, Chassé gave the signal for the commencement of the bombardment, which continued without ceasing during seven hours. Not merely did the guns of the citadel keep up their fire for the whole of that period, but the eight vessels of the Scheldt flotilla, drawn up in line, contributed their broadsides. It was computed at the time that 18,000 shot altogether were fired during the bombardment, to which the Belgians were helpless to make the least reply. Some Belgians with two six-pounders did attempt to return the ships' fire, but were quickly silenced. The Entrepôt, the largest and most important bond-houses in any Continental port, the Arsenal, and the adjacent houses were demolished. The fine Church of St. Michael was also destroyed, and a similar fate seemed to await the grand Cathedral, when, close on 10.30 at night, Captain Chazal (afterwards General and Baron) advanced under a white flag to the lunette of St. Laurent, despite the heavy firing, and begged Chassé, as one soldier from another, to spare the city and its finest memorial, which was the common glory of the Netherlands. Opinions differed as to whether Chassé was touched by the appeal, or whether he had become alive to the fact that his stores of ammunition were running out; but, whatever his reason, he ordered the bombardment to cease.

Meanwhile Rogier had arrived post-haste from Brussels to take over the civil government of Antwerp, and he at once entered into negotiations with the Dutch General for a regular armistice. A brief suspension of arms was arranged, and this was renewed several times, until at last, on 5th November, an agreement was come to that "affairs shall continue *in statu quo*, and that the renewal of hostilities shall be announced four days beforehand."

The bombardment of Antwerp, which cost the citizens a loss of between one and two hundred lives, and material damage to the extent of half a million sterling, added greatly to the bitterness of the struggle. Belgian opinion was expressed in

the phrase of one of the popular orators : " A river of fire and blood divides us for ever from King William and his dynasty." On 19th November the National Congress passed the formal resolution that " all members of the Orange-Nassau family are excluded in perpetuity from exercising any power in Belgium."

With regard to the suspicions prevalent at the time that the bombardment of Antwerp was inspired by Dutch jealousy of its commercial importance, which had begun to overshadow that of Rotterdam and even Amsterdam, there does not seem to be any basis. While the bombardment was going on the Count de Robiano said to General Niellon : " You witness the bombardment of Antwerp by Rotterdam." In fact, Chassé was a simple and rather brusque soldier who hated politics, and complex motives were not likely to influence his conduct. The Belgians were in his eyes rebels to his Sovereign. For more than a month the Dutch troops had experienced a succession of reverses. It was necessary to do something to turn the tide, or his force would become disheartened and demoralised. These were the considerations that influenced him. In his dilemma he decided for the bombardment, which he hoped might strike terror into the citizens, and could not possibly entail any peril to himself. The triumph could not fail to be cheap and certain for the moment, whatever its ultimate consequences might prove. As his lieutenant in this affair, Duke Bernard of Saxe-Weimar, said to a delegation of citizens who waited on him with a petition to stay the bombardment : " You have done us all the harm you could. We are now doing you the same." Some Belgian writers give this delegation of Antwerp citizens the credit of bringing about the cessation of the bombardment, but the evidence seems to show that their mission failed, and that it was the subsequent effort of Chazal that was successful, as already stated.

The incidents at Antwerp marked the close of the fighting between Belgians and Dutch in the year 1830, and as there is a prevalent belief that the Belgians owe their independence entirely to the intervention and acts of England and France, it is necessary to make a pause at this point for the purpose of establishing what they actually accomplished alone and

without the aid or intervention of anyone. The details have been given in sufficient amplitude. It remains only to place on record the results. One month after the Dutch evacuated the Park in Brussels their forces had been expelled from the State of Belgium in its widest extent—that is to say, including the whole of the provinces of Limburg and Luxembourg. The Dutch only retained three fortresses, Luxembourg, Maestricht, and Antwerp citadel, and it was clear that their retention depended on the means of supplying their garrisons. In other words, of the three places held, Antwerp citadel alone, on account of its open communication by water, could be held secure. In such fighting as had taken place the Dutch had been defeated without exception. The army of “blouses” had uniformly triumphed over the army of tunics. Therefore the Belgians were fully justified in declaring that they had effected their own emancipation unaided, and that they had to thank nobody for their liberty and independence but themselves, and if the Belgian Revolution had ended in 1830 the truth of their assertion would have passed without challenge into the records of history.

But although the subsequent events will largely qualify this claim, and somewhat diminish the right of the Belgians to declare that they alone shaped their own destiny, they do not justify any observer or critic in disparaging the magnitude of what the Belgians themselves achieved single-handed in 1830. Their subsequent over-confidence, their neglect to apply themselves to the creation of an army, their belief on the morrow of the Antwerp bombardment that eloquent words and noble axioms would carry them through the rest of the national crisis when deeds backed up by cannon and bayonets were required, were to diminish their exclusive claim to the credit of creating modern Belgium. But if this qualification has to be made, it may also be said without fear of contradiction that it was what the Belgians did alone in 1830, their unbroken success, their patriotic ardour, that led England and France in 1831-2 to stand stanchly beside them in defiance of Dutch resentment and the menaces of the Holy Alliance. The Belgians had proved with their blood that they were worthy to be free and

to form an independent nation, and the public opinion of the only two European countries that could then be called free (excluding Switzerland as too small to count in great contests) endorsed this claim, and made it good in the teeth of every opposer.

While these events of a warlike character were in progress, the election of the 200 delegates who were to form the National Congress was being made throughout Belgium. In the centres where the national cause had aroused interest and enthusiasm there was no lack of men to choose from ; in some of the secluded parts of Flanders and Luxembourg it was, however, difficult to induce the local man to come forward into the glare of public life, but at last the choice of the provinces, the cities, and communes was completed, and the 200 delegates proceeded to Brussels. An examination of their names* shows that the people had done their duty, and that the National Congress was composed of men who represented the worth, the intelligence, and the antiquity of the Southern Netherlands with adequate dignity and comprehensiveness. The Congress was inaugurated on 10th November, when De Potter, as the oldest member of the Provisional Government, declared the session open ; but after the arrangement of the preliminaries, M. Gendebien, the father of the Minister of that name, was chosen President as the oldest member of the Congress.

Writing some years after the event, the Chevalier Huyttens described in the following words the work of the Congress :

The Belgian Revolution of 1830 made a nation, a dynasty, and a constitution. If it had confined itself to the last of these acts it is very possible that even although it raised great questions of internal organisation, it would not have attracted universal attention. But when it influenced the public law of Europe, when it called a people into existence, and linked that existence with that of a new dynasty, it took its place in general history. The Belgian Revolution of 1830 has, therefore, a double claim to rank as a European event.

The Congress continued to sit until 21st July, 1831, and held altogether 156 sittings. It is only necessary here to

* The list will be found in vol. i. of the authoritative work of Chevalier Emile Huyttens (*Les Discussions du congrès national de la Belgique*, 1830-1, 5 tom., Bruxelles, 1848).

enumerate the more important of its proceedings prior to the acceptance and ratification of the new Constitution in February, 1831. As soon as the Congress was assembled the Provisional Government resigned its powers, but at the request of the Congress it accepted a mandate to continue in charge of the executive functions in the State. The statement of resignation did not bear the signature of De Potter, who took a different view of the position from his colleagues, but the opinion was that he was animated by pique at "the loss of power." On the day following the reacceptance of office by the Provisional Government he wrote a letter (13th November) resigning his place, and he also caused it to be read to the assembly. It was not flattering to his self-love when the meeting listened to the reading in silence and passed to the order of the day.

The Congress commenced its debates by discussing three important issues and passing as many vital propositions. On 18th November it proclaimed "the independence of the Belgian people, except in so far as the relations of Luxembourg with the Germanic Confederation might be involved." On 22nd November it declared that the form of Government should be "a Constitutional Representative Government under a hereditary chief." On 24th November it pronounced "the formal and final exclusion of the House of Nassau from all share in the Government." Within a fortnight of its first meeting it thus accepted and ratified the three vital decisions of the Provisional Government.

The remainder of its work consisted in the discussion of the principles that should be embodied in the new Constitution. Among the questions passed in review were those relating to religion, the press, the powers of the Sovereign, the composition of the Legislature, the right of meeting, etc. The debates in the Congress went on concurrently with the drafting of the Constitution by the Commission, which thus had the advantage of knowing what views were prevalent on vital points. When it presented its draft of a Constitution at the end of January, 1831, the principles it embodied had already been thrashed out and endorsed by the Congress. A week's final dis-



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cussion, therefore, sufficed to turn the draft into a law, and to endow Belgium with a Constitution which has stood the test of nearly eighty years, for the modifications in 1894 and 1900 were only in details and left the main framework intact.

The Constitution was passed into law on 7th February, 1831, by decree of the National Congress. It contained in its final form 139 Articles, one of which (No. 131) provided for the right to revise the Constitution should the occasion arise in the future. Among the principal provisions were the recognition of the fact that Belgium by ancient tradition was divided into nine provinces, but the right was reserved "to divide the territory into a greater number if necessary." It was also stipulated that the assent of the Legislature was necessary before any other State or Colony could be annexed or added to the Kingdom. The executive power was to be divided between the King, the Chamber of Representatives, and the Senate; but the King was to be free of responsibility, all his acts being countersigned by a Minister, who thereby became responsible for them. The Sovereign, whose name did not appear in the Constitution, was to be Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy; but, generally speaking, his powers were very limited, and when the crown was offered to Prince Leopold a few months later, his remark, after reading through the text of the Constitution, was that its framers had left the King very little to do. In addition to the strictly limited character of his Sovereignty, the crown was vested in the male line, to the perpetual exclusion of females, but, in the event of the failure of all male heirs, the King was to have the right of nominating his successor with the consent of the Chambers. Should no such nomination be made, the throne would be declared vacant on the death of the Sovereign, and the Chambers, who were on such an occasion to be elected in double strength, would then proceed to elect a new ruler.

When these articles were drafted the nomination of a King had not been made, and in the Constitution as decreed by the Congress on 7th February the place where the King's name should come is left blank. But, curiously enough, the Congress

four days before had actually nominated a Prince to the vacant throne. Three candidates were then put forward by different sections of the Congress. The party sympathetic with France was in the ascendant, but there were many who saw the dangers to the country in the selection of a French Prince from the European point of view, and deemed it prudent to fix on a more neutral candidate, while still a third section, faithful to the old régime, put forward an Austrian representative. Out of these diverse views sprang the candidature of the Duc de Nemours, the Duc de Leuchtenberg, and the Archduke Charles.

By the rules laid down it was necessary for the successful candidate to receive more votes than all his rivals combined, and in consequence two ballots had to be taken. At the second voting the Duc de Nemours received ninety-seven votes as against ninety-five given for the two others. So far as the decision of the Congress went, Belgium was to have a French Prince as its first King, but Louis Philippe, as will be seen in the next chapter, very prudently withdrew his son's candidature immediately on the Belgian delegation notifying his nomination at the Louvre. The voting in the Congress showed that the French party in Belgium, which was led by M. Gendebien, was not so overwhelmingly strong as has been sometimes assumed. It had got the start of the purely national section, which only required a suitable nominee to reassert itself. The Duc de Nemours was a good and attractive candidate in himself, whereas his rivals were mere shadows, and yet he only secured the barest majority.

But the adoption of the monarchical system and the careful limitation of the King's powers as one of the three bodies of the Legislature were not the only, or even the most striking, features in the new Constitution.

It decreed an absolutely free press, subject to the rights of the individual citizen in the courts under the laws of the country. Nowhere has the press been more free, and nowhere has the individual citizen been more secure against press attack than in Belgium. The forfeiture of civil rights and the confiscation of property were abolished. A still more striking

feature in the Constitution was that, notwithstanding the strong Catholic sentiment of the country and the fact that, except for an insignificant minority, the whole nation were Catholics, it laid down that Church and State were to be absolutely distinct. This carried with it the corollary that all cults were free, and no one was to be interfered with or disqualified in the eyes of the law on account of his religious opinions. At the same time it was felt that it would be carrying religious toleration rather too far to allow of a Protestant King ruling a Catholic nation, and it was therefore stipulated that the King should be a member of the Roman Catholic Church. Here again the Constitution was interpreted in a very liberal spirit, for when King Leopold was elected he was not required to change his religion. In addition to freedom of religion, there were to be freedom of education and the right of public meeting.

Among the minor provisions of the Constitution were the selection of Brussels as the capital, the choice of the red, yellow, and black tricolour as the national flag, and the adoption of the motto *L'Union fait la force* ("Union is strength") as the State device. With regard to the composition of the Chambers, it was decreed that there should be half as many Senators as Deputies. The electorate was until 1894 on a very restricted basis.

The great achievement of the Belgians in 1830-1 was that they not merely rescued their country from a foreign yoke, and gave Europe a new Kingdom, but that they drafted for and by themselves an entirely new Constitution which has stood the test of time. The achievement would savour of the miraculous if we did not know, from our study of its earlier history,* that Belgium was a country which had always possessed a Constitution, or at least Constitutional privileges, even while subject to a foreign master. The Belgian Constitution framers had therefore only to draw upon the charters and ordinances of the past to get the main structure of their work, and having done this it was not so very difficult to clothe it in a modern dress. But the completeness of their success was

* See Part I., p. 369.

the true justification of the Belgian separation from Holland. As the charter of a free people to govern itself, the Belgian Constitution of February, 1831, was incomparably superior to the Fundamental Law of the House of Orange-Nassau. In this way the Belgians, having achieved their own freedom, showed that they knew how to rule themselves better than any foreigner had done.

CHAPTER VI.

The London Conference.

WE have now to turn to an entirely different scene, and to other actors than those who have up to this engaged our attention. The emancipation of the Belgians, the conversion of their provinces into a Kingdom, was something more than a local achievement ; it was an event that affected Europe, that disturbed the existing equilibrium, and that might permanently alter the balance of power. For these reasons the Belgian Revolution attracted general attention, and caused anxiety to all the great Governments, which in that day were represented by the five Powers—viz., England, France, Austria, Prussia, and Russia. Each Government took its own view of the matter. France, having just had its own Revolution, and having entered on a period of liberal government, was wholly sympathetic to Belgium. England, partly from sympathy with the House of Orange, partly from ignorance of the true Belgian situation, was at first sceptical, if not actively hostile.* She was also herself passing through a critical phase in her Parliamentary history, and the Tory Government of the hour was rather inclined to class reform and revolution in the same category. The three remaining Powers, joined in the Holy Alliance for the maintenance of absolutism, were openly opposed to the Belgian cause. It was well, perhaps, for the peace of Europe that they had troubles and anxieties of their own

* Princess Lieven mentions in her memoirs that she was dining with the King at the Pavilion at the end of September, when the leading topic of conversation was how the Dutch troops would fare in Brussels. The Duke of Wellington, who was present, expressed the opinion that a few whiffs of grape-shot would end the Revolution. Before the dinner ended a special messenger arrived bearing the news that the Dutch had evacuated Brussels. The Duke merely observed : " That is serious ! "

to deal with, and the unfortunate Poles who could not emancipate themselves may have contributed to some extent by their Revolution (November, 1830, to September, 1831) to the success of the Belgians, for the Russian Emperor's sympathy with his relative at The Hague was largely diverted by his own troubles nearer home.

The French Government was wholly sympathetic with the Belgians, but the desire of some French politicians to absorb Belgium, and of some Belgian public men to be absorbed by France, constituted a danger to both which in the heat of the moment was not fully appreciated—at least, in Belgium. The creation of a really independent Kingdom of Belgium was one thing, the addition of the Belgian provinces to France, either in the form of open annexation or by the choice of a French Prince to be their King, was quite another; and for some time English sympathy with the Belgians was fettered and diminished by the belief that the Belgian leaders were working for promoting this consummation.

But the Powers were led to take part in the Belgian imbroglio not solely by their own volition. They would doubtless have liked to remain spectators a little longer, until the situation had further developed; but King William applied to them, as the authors of the Treaty of Vienna, to come to his aid in bringing his rebellious subjects to obedience, and in their turn the Belgians also addressed their appeal to be recognised as a nation, asserting their right to govern themselves. King William was the first to move. He had also the text of treaties on his side, for the Belgian patriots, whatever might be said in their favour, were certainly upsetting some of the principal arrangements made by the Treaty of Vienna. In England, King William's appeal was received with more or less cordiality, and the Duke of Wellington, then at the head of the Government, was naturally biassed in favour of his friend and old comrade-in-arms, the Prince of Orange. The English official view at the moment of the question being raised for the first time was expressed in the following extract from the King's Speech on 26th October, 1830 :

I have witnessed with deep regret the state of affairs in the Low Countries.

I lament that the enlightened administration of the King should not have preserved his dominions from revolt, and that the wise and prudent measure of submitting the desires and complaints of his people to the deliberations of an extraordinary meeting of the States General should have led to his subjects revolting.

This statement was distinctly favourable to King William, whose action was described as "enlightened" and "wise," whereas the Belgians were regarded only as rebels. The most indulgent thing to say of it is that the paragraph was written in ignorance of the facts, and that the Belgians had themselves contributed to it by omitting to depute at once someone to London to explain them and to make good their cause. There was another circumstance that contributed to strengthen the bias in London in favour of the Dutch. The Belgians had neglected to send an envoy to London, but they had not acted similarly with regard to France.

On 28th September, the day after the evacuation of Brussels by the Dutch troops, M. Gendebien left for Paris. Five weeks elapsed before a similar step was taken with regard to England, and five weeks are sufficient to create a mountain of prejudice and misconception in public matters. It became well known in England that the Belgian leaders were in close communication with the French Government, and that M. Gendebien, the selected envoy, was in favour of the elevation of a French Prince to the throne of Belgium. The second visit of this rather exalted Belgian patriot to Paris on 16th October was made for the express purpose of proposing to Louis Philippe the nomination of his son, the Duc de Nemours, as the first King of the Belgians. These one-sided proceedings were not calculated to create enthusiasm for the Belgian cause in London. It was, indeed, the French Government which suggested to the Belgians the wisdom of addressing the British Government about their affairs, but the course was adopted too late to affect the language of the Speech in which King William IV. addressed his first Parliament.

On 1st November the Provisional Government deputed one of its ablest members, M. Sylvain Van de Weyer, to proceed to London on a special mission. He reached Dover on the

4th of the month, and the first document put into his hand was the King's Speech, from which the paragraph relating to Belgium has just been quoted. He had come at a bad moment, or, rather, he had arrived not a moment too soon. On reaching London, he had a long interview with the Foreign Secretary, Lord Aberdeen, and for the first time the rights and wrongs of the Belgians obtained a hearing from an English statesman. Lord Aberdeen listened for several hours, and at the conclusion he replied: "England upholds the sanctity of treaties, but will not interfere in Belgian affairs unless her interests are compromised."

In the course of his exposition M. Van de Weyer had said that, if the Powers were to arbitrarily intervene against them, the Belgians would throw themselves into the arms of their nearest neighbours, and fight to the death for their sovereign rights and independence. This led to Lord Aberdeen inquiring as to the real purpose of M. Gendebien's mission to Paris, and as to the truth of the statement that he had carried there a definite offer from the Belgian Government to receive a French Prince as their King. M. Van de Weyer explained that M. Gendebien's instructions were identical with his own, and that there was no possibility of his having made any such proposition—at least, in a formal or binding sense. Whatever M. Gendebien may have said in this matter, he went on to declare, would have been on his personal responsibility alone, and with a view to obtaining useful information for his Government in its search for a suitable Prince to fill the vacant Belgian throne. M. Van de Weyer's report of this interview to his own Government was to the effect that the British Minister gave him an attentive hearing, and seemed to be impressed by what he had stated.

M. Van de Weyer's second interview scarcely came within the scope of his instructions or the ordinary experiences of a diplomatist charged with an antagonistic mission. On the day after the interview with Lord Aberdeen he was informed that the Prince of Orange was in London, and he was asked if he would object to see the Prince. The suggestion was unusual, but as his English hosts seemed to wish it, M. Van de

Weyer consented to call upon the Prince in his private capacity.

The Prince of Orange, despite his failure at Antwerp, still clung to the hope that he might gain the suffrages of the Belgian people, and it must be remembered that at this moment the National Congress had not yet met and passed sentence on the House of Orange. His visit to London had been inspired by the hopes raised by the passage in the King's Speech, but there is no reason for supposing that it was intended as a set-off to that of M. Van de Weyer. On the contrary, it seems that the Prince was surprised at the presence of a Belgian delegate in London, but when he heard who it was he bethought him of the last occasion on which they had met in the Palace of Brussels, when he and M. Van de Weyer had drafted together his famous Proclamation to the Belgian people. At that time M. Van de Weyer would have been a strong supporter of the nomination of the Prince of Orange. Was it possible that he had so completely changed his views as to have become his resolute opponent? The Prince of Orange alone seemed blind to all that had occurred in the intervening eight weeks.

The interview between them took place on 8th November. M. Van de Weyer was courteous, even compassionate, for, with all his faults, the Prince of Orange had meant well; but he was also frank. The Prince led the conversation to his one main question—Would the Belgians receive him as King or ruling Prince?—and M. Van de Weyer replied with absolute conviction and conciseness that in his opinion “the House of Orange-Nassau had lost all chance of ruling Belgium in any form or under any title.” A fortnight later the National Congress passed its memorable Decree to that effect.

The third and most important interview of all was that with the Duke of Wellington on 11th November. The well-known friendship and regard between the Duke and the Prince led the Belgian delegate to take a gloomy view of the probable result of the meeting. He had no real hope of finding in the famous soldier an impartial observer of his country's critical position; the most favourable supposition was that he might

recognise the separation of the two States on the basis of the Prince of Orange's nomination.

The result was more agreeable than M. Van de Weyer could have expected. Events had moved rapidly since the King's Speech, and the Duke had moved with them. Lord Aberdeen had listened to some purpose, as the decision of the British Government, conveyed by the Duke, revealed. The pith of his remarks was that Belgium could select what form of Government she might think proper, or whatever chief she might think most suited to effect the object she had in view. He added the specific assurance that if the Belgians did not embroil themselves with Europe, England would not intervene. The Duke added one word of warning. Union with France, he said, would certainly entail a general European war, and it is probable that he added his conviction that the selection of a French Prince as King would be tantamount to open union. On the whole, however, the Duke's assurance was a formal sanction by England of Belgian independent action, and that was the consolatory message M. Van de Weyer took back with him to Brussels.

During his visit to London, M. Van de Weyer had met with a good deal of sympathy for the Belgian cause in Opposition circles. Mr. Hobhouse made a speech on behalf of the Belgian reformers in the House of Commons, and introduced M. Van de Weyer to leading Liberal personages. He took him, among other places, to Holland House, where the presiding lady asked M. Van de Weyer, with a mixture of patronage and petulance, "But who are the Belgians?" and received the neat reply, "It was a person called Julius Cæsar who gave them their name." The cry for reform was in the air, and those who were reformers in England would have been revolutionists on the Continent; so it came about that the Liberals took the Belgian patriots in some degree under their protection, and the conviction began to spread in political circles that the Belgians, who had been so long subject to others that their separate identity had been lost sight of, were a people quite capable of managing their own affairs.

Before M. Van de Weyer's arrival in London the prelimi-

naries for a Conference of the five Powers had been arranged. Baron Falck, the Dutch representative in London, had handed in his master's request to the Powers who had signed the treaties of 1814 and 1815 to intervene and compel the Belgians to comply with their terms. Russia, Austria, and Prussia supported the King's view; France was opposed to it; and the action of England was uncertain. The proposal of the British Government that a Conference should be held was accepted by the others, and London was fixed as the place of meeting. England was represented by the Foreign Secretary, the other four Powers by their Ambassadors in London, all of the five receiving special powers as plenipotentiaries for the Conference. Baron Falck claimed the right for his Sovereign to be represented as the sixth member of the Conference, but his pretension was rejected. The five Powers, who had created the Kingdom of the Netherlands, claimed an exclusive right to deal with its component parts. They declared that the common interests of Europe in maintaining the balance of power and the preservation of the general peace were superior to the special and separate claims of the House of Orange-Nassau on one side and of the Belgian people on the other.

The plenipotentiaries were in their order: Prince Esterhazy for Austria, Prince Talleyrand for France, Lord Aberdeen for Great Britain, Baron Bulow for Prussia, and Baron Matuszewicz for Russia. Soon after the commencement of its labours Lord Palmerston succeeded Lord Aberdeen, and Prince Lieven became the chief representative of Russia. The opening meeting of the Conference was held in London on 4th November, when the plenipotentiaries drew up and signed the First Protocol. This Protocol was very brief, and limited itself to demanding "the complete cessation of hostilities" in the name of the Powers, a regular armistice to be agreed upon afterwards. The cessation of hostilities was demanded "in order to avoid the useless effusion of blood, and to preserve the general peace of Europe." The Protocol, it was announced, would be followed by as early an intimation as possible of the manner in which the Conference intended to deal with the situation that existed in the Southern Netherlands. The

assertion of this superior right of control over the proceedings and future of the Belgian nation chafed not unnaturally the more ardent spirits among the Brussels patriots, and M. Van de Weyer complains in several of his letters, during both his first and second missions, of the way in which the Conference decided questions affecting his country without any regard for its wishes or the facts. Still, the Provisional Government accepted the First Protocol on 10th November, and ordered the Proclamation as to the cessation of hostilities to be published three days later.

On 17th November the Conference issued its Second Protocol. This was to the effect that the observance of the armistice was an engagement undertaken by the Dutch and the Belgians to the five Powers directly. This proviso also was accepted by the Belgians on 21st November, and two days later by King William. A very important divergence of view now revealed itself. What were the respective limits within which the opposing forces were to confine themselves? The Powers specified the territory directly subject to King William, and consequently occupiable by his troops, to be the limits of April, 1814—that is, at the moment of the disappearance of the French Empire, and before the fate of the Belgian or Southern Netherlands had been decided upon. This meant leaving in the possession of the Dutch not only territory that the Belgians claimed by indefeasible right, but also territory which had successfully revolted against Dutch rule.

The Belgians claimed as belonging to them three separate portions of the old Seventeen Provinces united in the House of Burgundy. They were (1) the left bank of the Scheldt below Antwerp, this district being known in history as Flandre des Etats, or Dutch Flanders; (2) the towns of Maestricht and Venloo, as forming part of the Province of Limburg; and (3) the whole of Luxembourg, including what was called the Grand Duchy. The Diplomatic Committee, which constituted the Belgian Foreign Office for the moment, set forth the Belgian case on each of these points in three masterly and erudite minutes*; but when M. Van de Weyer and the Vicomte

* For text, see tom. iv. of Huyttens', *op. cit.*

Vilain XIII. were sent to London on 1st January, 1831, to impress these views on the Conference, they received a cold response to the effect that its decision was not favourable to the system of limits adopted by Belgium. This result had been foreshadowed in the objections raised to the Belgian pretensions in the middle of December by Mr. Cartwright and M. Brésson, who represented the Conference as special commissioners at Brussels.

The limits to which the armistice was to apply constituted one difficulty, but the faithful execution of the armistice itself soon furnished another of greater magnitude. The Dutch Government had not been backward in giving its adhesion to the demand to suspend hostilities, and it had also promised compliance with the accompanying requirement of the Conference, to the effect that the blockade of the Belgian ports and rivers should be raised. King William's Proclamations of November 23rd and 25th seemed to settle the point in an entirely favourable sense, and the Fourth Protocol of 30th November assumed that all was satisfactory, and that the essential preliminaries to a conclusion of the quarrel—viz., suspension of hostilities, raising of the blockade, and exchange of prisoners—had all been arranged.

But the Dutch were not of the same way of thinking. Their idea of the armistice was that they should derive as much advantage as possible out of it, and at the same time withhold all the advantage they could from their adversary. A suspension of arms was good, because it gave them time to muster troops; an exchange of prisoners was good, because there were 1,000 Dutch prisoners in Belgian fortresses and few Belgians in Dutch; but the raising of the blockade was bad, because it would benefit Belgian commerce and make Antwerp prosper. So they did not raise the blockade. King William's formal acceptance of the Protocols remained on record, but the Dutch Admiral of the Scheldt had orders to detain Belgian shipping at Flushing, and not allow it to proceed up to Antwerp.

The Belgians complained, the Conference became angry with King William, and refused to entertain his plea, and in its Fifth Protocol, dated 10th December, told the Dutch ruler

very plainly that his order "shutting the Scheldt" was tantamount to enforcing a strict blockade, and that the Powers would regard it as a personal affront to themselves unless he did what he was told and what he had already promised to do. Unfortunately this Dutch mode of obeying the Protocols created great irritation in Belgium, where the opinion was generally held that the London Conference was unduly lenient to King William, and it was not surprising to find that the Belgians retaliated later on by a less strict observance of the suspension of hostilities clause than they would otherwise have shown, and that collisions occurred from time to time along the frontier.

To a certain extent the action of King William in the matter of the blockade, which was neither candid nor just, entailed its own punishment. Up to this point the Conference had given no indication of its intentions on the main point at issue—viz., the future of the Belgian provinces. Its action was hastened first by the shifty conduct of the Dutch ruler in the matter of the blockade, and, secondly, by his unexpected appeal to Austria and Prussia to help him to put down the revolution in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, which formed part of the Germanic Confederation. The Governments of the two States replied that they would defer action until they knew how the London Conference dealt with the general question of Belgium's future. These attempts to set aside the pledges demanded by and given to the London Conference decided the Plenipotentiaries, strengthened by the advent of Lord Palmerston to the Foreign Office, to make a formal pronouncement on the main question. This was embodied in the important Seventh Protocol of 20th December, 1830.

This Protocol commenced with a reference to the Treaties of 1814 and 1815, whose object was to establish a just equilibrium in Europe, and to insure the general peace, and then went on to record that the union of the Northern and Southern Provinces in a single Kingdom of the Netherlands had not attained the object with which the Powers had created it. Its fiat then ran: "The perfect and complete amalgam which the Powers wished to bring about between Belgium and Holland

has not been obtained, and we will now concert the best measures to combine the future independence of Belgium with the stipulations of the treaties, the interests and security of the Powers, and the preservation of the balance of European power." The Protocol went on to exclude the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg from its provisions, and thus damped the hopes of the Belgians in that direction. On the other hand, by formally decreeing that Belgium was to be a separate State, entirely removed from his control, it made King William furious and resolute to wreck the work of the Conference by every means in his power.

The Belgians would have been wiser if they had promptly accepted the situation created by the Protocol of 20th December, and, while lodging their protest on reserved points, expressed their intention to abide by the decision of the Powers. But instead of taking this course, they returned a sort of memorial, dated 3rd January, 1831, laying down the principle that "Belgium must be independent, strong, and contented," and setting forth four requirements before that result would be considered by them to be attained. They were : (1) Freedom of the Scheldt ; (2) possession of the left bank of the Scheldt ; (3) possession of the whole of Limburg ; and (4) possession of the whole of Luxembourg, subject to the obligations of that part of it called the Grand Duchy as a member of the German Federation. The Conference, which had been irritated with King William for his devious ways in the matter of the blockade, now became doubly annoyed with Belgium for not humbly accepting the gifts it chose to offer. It was the more annoyed in this case because, without waiting for the full reply from Brussels, it had, on 27th December, issued another Protocol (No. 8), recording Belgium's acceptance of the principles of its predecessor, and calling upon King William in still more peremptory terms than before to put an end to all preventive or obstructive measures in regard to the navigation of the Scheldt.

When the Conference realised, therefore, that Belgium had not really accepted the Protocol as drafted, but had put forward several distinct pretensions which ran counter to its

views and decisions, it became very angry, and returned the protests of the Belgian representatives with the curt announcement that it declined to receive them. It was on this occasion that M. Van de Weyer paid his second visit to London, where he remained during the greater part of January, 1831. Despite all his tact and energy, the Conference would not give him even a hearing to expound the views of his Government on the true limits of their own country.

The Dutch authorities, despite the fulminations of the Conference, still maintained the blockade in fact, and, unable to defend their own conduct, proceeded to buttress their bad case by attacking the action of the Belgians. A note was sent from The Hague, alleging that the Belgians were moving troops in Limburg, which would have the effect of isolating Maestricht. The Conference, in its ninth Protocol, called upon the two parties to respect the armistice, Holland to remove the blockade, and Belgium to desist from hostile movements on land. When the reports of the Belgian aggressions near Maestricht became more persistent, it threatened Belgium, in the tenth Protocol, that military steps would be taken against her unless she desisted. It will thus be seen that neither of the two principals was very amenable to the advice or orders of the Plenipotentiaries. In Downing Street the atmosphere was calm, and just as the gods of Olympus were supposed to look down with condescension on the petty affairs of men, so did the representatives of the five Great Powers treat *de haut en bas* the fortunes and the destinies of the two nations of the Netherlands. But in the debatable provinces men's passions ran high, and it seemed easier to settle moot points by the sword in utter disregard of the convenience of the Powers and the peace of Europe.

The recalcitrant attitude of its enforced clients urged the Conference to hasten its own action. Having told them in plain terms that the settlement did not rest with them, it proceeded to prescribe what it thought good for them in a fresh Protocol (No. 11 of 20th January, 1831). This Protocol, which aimed at laying down the bases for the separation of Belgium and Holland, began by reiterating that the maintenance of the general peace was the main object of the Powers. It

therefore decreed *ex cathedrâ* that Holland was to get all the territory which had belonged to the Republic of the United Provinces of the Netherlands in 1790, and that Belgium was to get the rest of what remained out of the limits of the Kingdom of the Netherlands created in 1815, with the exception of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. This meant that the three territorial claims of the Belgians were summarily rejected. To the fiat of the Conference the Belgian National Congress opposed the empty protest of a formal vote of non-compliance. There was an air of classic dignity in the Belgian attitude. Neither the accumulated wisdom nor the force of Europe would lead them to waive one right or abate one jot of their national sovereignty.

Out of the impasse thus created trouble was to come, and it was providential that the crisis did not turn to grim tragedy. Resenting the state of tutelage in which they were placed by the diplomatists, the Belgian Congress decided to choose at least their own King ; hence the submission of the three names mentioned at the close of the last chapter. The voting on the subject and the choice of the Duc de Nemours were partly a defiance and partly a *brutum fulmen* ; for, notwithstanding the persistence of the Belgian delegates, Gendebien and Firmin Rogier at Paris, King Louis Philippe repeated his determination not to allow his son to accept the crown, even if he were elected. The Duc de Nemours himself expressed a marked diffidence of his own capacity to fill so difficult and responsible an office, and also declared that, if elected, he would be unable to accept the throne. It consequently seemed that the Belgian Congress were giving themselves an infinity of trouble to elect an unwilling and impossible candidate. Nor was there anything more practical about the nomination of the Duc de Leuchtenberg. This personage was the son and successor of Eugène de Beauharnais, in the Duchy of Leuchtenberg, which had been created for the ex-Regent of Italy in 1817. Louis Philippe, when declining to allow his son to be nominated, had added by the mouth of his Minister that he would regard the election of the Duc de Leuchtenberg, a member of the Napoleonic family, as an "unfriendly act" to France, which

would leave him no choice save to recall his representative from Brussels.

The reputation of the Belgian Congress for practical common sense was, therefore, not raised by its procedure in the first election of a suggested ruler for the country. Undoubtedly the mainstay of the Belgians in their effort for independence had been the cordial support of France ; yet the candidate who was so seriously supported as to obtain almost as many votes as the Duc de Nemours was one whose election would have been an " unfriendly act " to France. The Prince elected was also ineligible by the admission of his own Sovereign and himself, and when the formal notification of his election was made on 17th February by a special delegation from the Congress, headed by the President, Baron Surlet de Chokier, the refusal by both father and son was once more definite and unshakable.

It is not at all clear what the Belgian Ministers hoped to gain by these sterile manœuvres. If they wished to snub England and propitiate France, their tactics were bad and contradictory. If this were their object, they should have adopted the hint of the French Government to elect Prince Otto of Bavaria (who in the following year was elected the first King of modern Greece), and then marry him to a French Princess. Various theories have been put forward to explain the hidden motives of the useless candidature of the Duc de Nemours, which, disapproved of by the French Government, was still persisted in by the Belgian leaders, who alleged that they were led by prominent Frenchmen—M. Bresson, the French representative of the Conference in Brussels, among them—to believe that, despite all his assertions, Louis Philippe would in the end accept the accomplished fact. In this the Belgians were wrong and misled. Why were they misled ?

The most plausible theory is that M. Bresson learnt that the Duc de Leuchtenberg was certain to be elected by the Congress, unless the French Prince figured as his rival. The candidature of the Duc de Nemours was, therefore, allowed to go on, in order to prevent the election of a German-Napoleonic



VISCOUNT PALMERSTON.



Prince, which would be an "unfriendly act" to France. Time would thus be gained for making other arrangements.

That is a sufficient explanation of French policy, but it does not throw any light on the action of the Belgians. To explain their attitude, their persistency in going on with the Nemours election after they knew it to be useless, other theories have had to be imagined. A sprightly French writer persuaded himself and many of his readers that the Belgians wished to throw themselves in the lap of France, and to force her to take over the destinies of their State ; but he goes on to declare that France did not want Belgium. To illustrate his meaning he quotes the story of another community which once wished to force itself as a gift on France. It was the Republic of Genoa, whose chosen envoys made formal tender of their country at Paris to the French King, receiving the reply : "Genoa gives itself to me. Very kind of it ! I give it to the devil." In 1831 France did not want Belgium even as a gift, because she feared it might prove a shirt of Nessus ; but the Belgians, misled by M. Gendebien, who was a zealous advocate of the union of all of Belgian race, and who saw that this could only be brought about through France, were completely ignorant of the real policy of the French King and his Government.

The proceedings of the Belgian Congress did not make a favourable impression in London, where the acceptance of the Protocol was impatiently awaited. Some of the unpleasant feelings raised by the ill-timed and injudicious nomination of unsuitable candidates for the throne were removed or allayed by the proclamation of a Regency, and by the rumours that a more suitable ruler might be found in Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, so closely connected with the English Royal Family. But the Protocols of 20th and 27th January remained unratified, and new dangers were being daily created. The Regent, Baron Surlet de Chokier, who had done well as President of the Congress, nominated Ministers to Paris and London. M. Charles le Hon was sent to France, and the French Government deputed Count Belliard to Brussels in the same capacity. But the British Government refused to receive

Count d'Arschot, and thus marked its displeasure at the delay in accepting the decisions of the Conference.

But the displeasure of the British Government was not the most serious factor in the situation. There was an extraordinary Orange plot at Ghent, and some of the military were suspected of sympathising with a fresh movement in favour of the Prince of Orange. The differences and doubts among the Belgians themselves produced a reaction of feeling abroad, and even those who sympathised with the Belgians began to lose faith in their success and future.

Although the Belgian Revolution had been remarkably free from excesses of all kinds, there was a good deal of trouble at this time of a social order. In several towns the mob attacked and pillaged the houses of wealthy citizens accused of Orange sympathies, and the shopkeepers of Brussels called for the speedy re-establishment of a Court in their midst. The gravity of these incidents was recognised by M. Nothomb, who, in his excellent study of the Revolution, records his opinion, as an eyewitness of what was going on, that "after the falling through of the Nemours candidature anarchy was rapidly spreading throughout Belgium." There was some talk in the critical month of March, 1831, of solving the problem by dividing Belgium between France, Prussia, and England (the last-named receiving Antwerp); but Lord Palmerston declared that he had never heard of the project, and that if he had, he would never have approved of it. The allegation that England contemplated occupying Antwerp in 1831 may be treated as a myth.

The only person who seems to have seriously thought of subdividing Belgium between the three Powers was Talleyrand. It may be described as a personal scheme of the old statesman, with which the French Government had nothing to do, and with which no Frenchman bred in the belief of the unity of Gaul would have sympathised. Talleyrand is said to have built up his scheme on a theory which he had repeated so often without contradiction that he at last persuaded himself it must be true. At the moment when the Belgians were imperilling their independence in order that their brethren in the

remotest districts of Limburg and Luxembourg should not be separated from them, Talleyrand flippantly declared : " There are no Belgians, never were any, and never will be any. There are French, Flemings or Dutch (the same thing), and Germans." Out of this ethnical digression he devised a partition scheme, and then, remembering that England might require a sop, he threw Antwerp in her lap. Talleyrand's partition scheme in his dotage was the kind of political scheming that excites ridicule. It is gratifying not to find a trace of sympathy with it among English public men of the day.

On the other hand, there is too much evidence available for us to attempt to deny that, long after the British Government had expressed its intention to leave the choice of their new ruler to the Belgians themselves, it was animated by sentiments favourable to the House of Orange personally, which biassed its views of the question, and ran counter in a certain degree to its own positive declarations. In some way or other the Foreign Office had persuaded itself that the more respectable classes in Belgium wished the Prince of Orange to rule them, and that the famous veto of the Congress was merely the work of a few fanatical extremists who had succeeded in catching a snatch vote at the moment when indignation at the Antwerp bombardment was at its height. But the consequences of this view might have been very serious for the Belgians. At the least it was responsible for the holding back of Prince Leopold's candidature over many months, and for a troublesome Orange movement or conspiracy in Belgium itself.

The Prince of Orange passed the winter of 1830-1 in London. It was the best place to keep himself in the minds of the Plenipotentiaries, to influence their decisions, and to make the most of the situation generally. It was also convenient for Belgium, whence there came from time to time rumours of dissatisfaction with the uncertain state of things, which made trade and commerce stagnant. There was, indeed, no united Orange party left in Belgium, but there were some individuals who clung to the idea of the Prince of Orange's return, and there were a few desperate men who thought they

saw in such a scheme the means of making their own fortunes. It was natural that they should seek to establish some relations with the Prince of Orange ; it was not unnatural, perhaps, that the Prince should encourage and support them for the attainment of his own object.

Among the men dissatisfied with the existing régime was Ernest Gregoire, French by birth, an ardent patriot in the August fighting, foremost in the efforts to expel the Dutch from Brussels, and not wanting in courage and resource. Rewarded with a Lieutenant-Colonelcy, Gregoire grew discontented at the greater advancement of others, while his failure in some minor skirmishes in Dutch Flanders somewhat shook his position among the patriots. Still, he was left in command of the force at Bruges, and it was from that place that he made his overtures to the Prince of Orange. His services were accepted, and Gregoire set to work to carry out the scheme in his own way.

Colonel Van der Smissen, the artillery officer whose guns had done such useful work at Waterloo, commanded at Antwerp. He, too, got into touch with the Prince, although he averred in his Memoirs that he only entered into the scheme because he was assured of English interest and support, and it was arranged that a general Orange rising was to be made at the end of February or the beginning of March. The development of the conspiracy was marked by a succession of indiscretions. The conspirators talked of their intentions, and some of those in power were invited by their friends and relations to come over. A large number of persons were technically involved who had not the least intention of committing themselves in any plot to change the Government, and the most remarkable thing about the affair was that everybody seemed to know and to talk of the coming manifestation without anyone turning informer. It was difficult to take such a conspiracy seriously ; no one augured its success.

Their methods, however, did not suit Gregoire, who was in deadly earnest, and who had a reputation to make. He took his Lieutenant, named De Bast, into his confidence, and between them they won over their little force, and with the

aid of money and liquor they succeeded in inducing 400 men to follow them in a march to capture Ghent. As there were in Ghent 4,000 men of a sort, commanded by two of the newly created Generals, Duvivier and Wauthier, whose superior rank had been one of the causes of Gregoire's disaffection, the attack on the place was not without a certain measure of boldness, and, like all bold schemes where success is not achieved, it went within an ace of attaining it.

Gregoire set out with his men in the evening of 1st February, and reached Ghent early in the morning of the following day. No enemy was expected, and it was not difficult to seize a gate. Dividing his force into two bodies, one under himself and the other under De Bast, they advanced at a quick pace down parallel streets to the shout of "Long live Orange!" Everything conspired in their favour. The garrison attempted no resistance, the citizens were confused and cowed, and the coup seemed to have succeeded beyond all reasonable expectation. One man turned the day.

De Bast's column had as its objective the barrack or head station of the Pompiers, the fire brigade of Ghent. This corps numbered 100 men, and included some old soldiers who had seen fighting in the recent operations. Their commander, named Van de Poel, was a man of resolution, and as some of the corps were on watch throughout the night, he had early intimation of what was happening. Quickly putting his small body in military array, he got out of his magazine the two six-pounder guns which formed part of his men's equipment when on active service, and prepared to resist the intruders. De Bast was also a brave man, and when he found his progress opposed, he ordered the charge. The encounter was short and fierce. In a few minutes eighty of his men were left killed and wounded on the ground, himself among the latter. Van de Poel's resistance rallied the waverers, and Gregoire, seeing the game was up, took to flight. He rode hard for the Dutch frontier, but at Eecloo, which he had passed through a few hours previously, he was recognised and made prisoner. He was sent back, tied and bound, to the city he had tried to capture. When he and his Lieutenant were put on their trial a little

later, the Belgians, instead of shooting them, as other Governments would have done, sent them contemptuously out of the country, and they punished the Prince of Orange by publishing the familiar correspondence that he had addressed to this somewhat shady adventurer.

The more formidable Orange plot fizzled out without a single sensational incident. Van der Smissen received word that he would be wise to leave the country, and he fled to Aix la Chapelle. When he reached that place he made what in these days would be called a sensational disclosure. He declared, as already stated, that England was at the bottom of the Orange plot, and that she only threw him and the rest over on learning from M. Lebeau that Prince Leopold would be elected to the throne.

The question of Belgium's future as a stable Monarchy took a favourable turn at the end of March, 1831, when the Regent, Baron Surlet de Chokier, nominated his second Ministry, and the conduct of foreign affairs was placed in the capable hands of M. Joseph Lebeau. Associated with him was M. Devaux, who also rendered good service during the crisis. It was well that some calmer judgment was imported into the question, and that men now came to the front who saw that Belgium must take what she could get without imperilling all by clamouring for what she conceived she had a right to. In their dilemma the friendly word of good counsel came from France.

On 4th April the French Government adhered for its own part* to the Protocols of 20th and 27th January, and instructed Count Belliard to advise the Belgians to do so also in their own essential interests. Some days later France took advantage of a fresh Protocol to make a declaration that she had always wished to remain united with the other four Powers. This declaration was necessary to convince some of the hot-headed Belgians, like Gendebien, that France would not immolate herself for them in a vain struggle with the rest of Europe. Still Belgium would not accept the Protocols maiming her territory.

* At the time of the despatch of these Protocols, Prince Talleyrand had signed *ad referendum*, leaving his Government a means of backing out if they wished.

On 10th May, therefore, the Conference issued its twenty-third Protocol, calling on Belgium to adhere by 1st June, or to take the consequences. This notice was tantamount to an ultimatum. The sequel will show how the necessity of either bending to the blow or inviting grave peril by further defiance was averted, but this episode in which the personality of Prince Leopold played the principal part must be treated in a separate chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

Prince Leopold's Election.

IN the early stages of Belgium's search for a Sovereign, Prince Leopold's name was mentioned at least twice by persons speaking with authority. In December, 1830, M. Devaux, addressing the Congress, said: "After all, is our choice of a suitable Sovereign so limited? Is there not Prince Leopold?" In January, 1831, M. Van de Weyer asked Lord Grey whether the British Government would sanction Prince Leopold's candidature, and received a chilly refusal; and yet in Belgium Prince Leopold was generally considered the English nominee, and for various reasons—some natural and others the outcome of prejudice—the Belgians did not want an English Prince. It must, however, be mentioned in explanation of the British official disapproval of Prince Leopold's candidature that in the preliminaries of arranging the Conference the Powers had made "a declaration of disinterestedness" to the effect that the ruling Prince of Belgium was not to be a member of the ruling families in any of the five States. This explanation of British policy in the early part of 1831 has been quite overlooked. Before proceeding further, some particulars of the family and personal history of Prince Leopold are necessary, and will be interesting.

The House of Saxony, with its legendary descent from Witikind, the antagonist of Charlemagne, represents one of the six Duchies of the old German Empire. In 1485 the importance and power of the family were somewhat diminished by the division of the estates between two brothers, Ernest and Albert, the former of whom, as the elder, retained the style of Duke and Elector of Saxony. In 1547, after events which do not concern

us, the Emperor Charles V. transferred the authority and title of Duke and Elector from the elder or Ernestine branch, which had adopted Protestantism, to the younger or Albertine, which had remained constant to the old Faith, in the person of Maurice, with whose descendants the Duchy, now the Kingdom, of Saxony has ever since remained.

One of the families founded by the dispossessed Ernestine line became at the end of the 17th century the Dukes of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld, and it was of this family that Prince Leopold was a scion. In 1825, it may be added, on the extinction of the senior Ernestine line of Saxe-Gotha, the title and principality of Gotha passed to the Saxe-Coburgs, so that at the time of his election to the Belgian throne Prince Leopold's correct description had changed from simply Saxe-Coburg to Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. In the wars of the 18th century the Coburg Princes serving under the Imperial House of Hapsburg played a prominent part. One of Prince Leopold's great-uncles was killed in a battle of the Seven Years' War; another was the Field-Marshal who won the battle of Neerwinden in 1793, and expelled the French on that occasion from Belgium.

Prince Leopold was born at Coburg on 16th December, 1790, being the eighth child and third son of Prince Francis (who in 1800 succeeded his father as Duke), and of his wife, a Princess of the House of Reuss-Ebersdorff. His godfather was Leopold II., the Emperor of Germany. The Prince grew up amid the troubles of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, when Germany was a scene of constant and disastrous strife, and for some years Coburg itself was ruled by a French administrator. In later life Prince Leopold drew up some notes of his earlier days, from which the following passage may be extracted :

“ My poor father, whose health had been shattered early, was a most lovable character; he was affability itself. He was passionately fond of the arts and sciences. My beloved mother was an uncommon woman, and worthy of respect; she had a warm heart and a fine intellect. Her affection for her children was profound. Without wishing to say anything against the other branches of the House of Saxony, ours was

certainly the most intellectual, in the true acceptation of the term, without affectation and without pedantry."

The relative, however, who exercised most influence on the young Prince was his grandmother, the Duchess Ernest, who was a Princess of the House of Brunswick-Wolfenbützel, sister of the wife of Frederick the Great and of Ulrica, Queen of Denmark. All her contemporaries agreed that she was a remarkable woman, and her grandson wrote in the memorandum mentioned: "Coburg was in all things under her orders, and she acted in respect of the little Duchy as if it had been a great Empire. The Duke stood in great awe of his imperious wife. But I must not say anything against her, as I was her favourite."

The Prince received a careful education under the direction of Dr. Hoflender, head of the ecclesiastical department of Coburg, and first professor in the Casimir College. To quote from the memorandum mentioned: "By him he was taught Biblical history, ethics, and the doctrines of Christianity. The professor also presided at the Prince's Confirmation, which took place on the 12th September, 1805. He afterwards taught him Latin, the rudiments of Russian, logic, and moral sciences. The Prince exerted himself besides to master French, English, and Italian. He studied history and the law of nations; and lastly, by way of recreation, he gave himself up passionately to the cultivation of botany, drawing, and, above all, music. Being destined for the career of arms, he applied himself with the like ardour to his military studies." It will thus be seen that Prince Leopold was trained for his duties in life, no matter what station he might attain to, in a way that was at the period unknown out of Germany, and only practised there in a few exceptional cases.

Before passing on, some reference may be made to his brothers and sisters. His eldest brother, Ernest, future Duke, and father of our Prince Consort, was at this period living at the Prussian Court, and his other brother, Ferdinand, was in the Austrian army. His four sisters had married respectively Duke Alexander of Würtemberg, Count Mensdorff-Pouilly, Prince of Leiningen, and the Grand Duke Constantine of Russia. Already, then, in that generation the Coburg Alliances,



PRINCE LEOPOLD IN 1814.



which have made so much of European history since, were important and far-reaching.

Soon after completing his studies Prince Leopold had his first experience of war. Napoleon, at the head of the Grand Armée, advanced into Austria towards the end of the year 1805; Russia came to her aid, and Prince Leopold, with his eldest brother, was attached to the Emperor Alexander's staff. In the great battle of Austerlitz, December, 1805, the three brothers all took part, Ferdinand fighting with his Austrian Hussar regiment. The year 1806 was, however, the fatal one for Coburg. It was involved in the consequences of the Prussian overthrow at Jena, and, overcome by his troubles, the poor Duke died, having held the title only six years. For a time Coburg was ruled as a French possession, but the Treaty of Tilsit, thanks to Russian intercession, restored his principality to the young Duke Ernest. The two brothers visited Paris to thank the Emperor for this act, and Napoleon wished very much to retain Leopold as his aide-de-camp. They met again at Erfurt, where Napoleon renewed his proposals; but Leopold made a tactful excuse. When, however, a little later, he expressed a desire to enter the Russian service, Napoleon was furious, and threatened the Duke with the loss of his Duchy if his young brother carried out his intention. During the critical years that followed Leopold travelled in Italy, but on the news of the French disasters in 1812 he returned to Germany, and the three Coburg Princes took an active and prominent part in organising the war of liberation.

Prince Leopold joined the Russian army in January, 1813. "I was the first German Prince," he wrote, "to join the liberating army." He was present at the battles of Lutzen and Bautzen in command of a cavalry division, and he took part in most of the encounters which culminated at Leipsic. During the advance on Paris he distinguished himself on numerous occasions, gaining the highest military orders that the rulers of Austria, Prussia, and Russia could bestow. In 1814 he accompanied the Emperor Alexander on his visit to London, which was destined to have momentous consequences for the young Prince, who was by general admission the handsomest

of the foreign Princes at the fêtes and ceremonies celebrating the peace which closed the long war with the exile of Napoleon to Elba.

The visit to London was made memorable because during it Prince Leopold attracted the favourable notice of the Princess Charlotte, only daughter of the Prince of Wales, afterwards King George IV., and heiress-presumptive to the throne of the United Kingdom. The Princess was then nineteen years of age, and both beautiful and highly intellectual and intelligent. Her father and the Government wished her to marry the Prince of Orange, but she asserted her independent right to give her hand where her heart inclined her. Still, she had not then refused the Prince of Orange. She was weighing his merit and her own inclination when Leopold appeared on the scene in the character of Prince Charming, and the Prince of Orange's chances ended. It must be remembered that the Prince and Princess were cousins through the House of Brunswick. The reader should bear this fact in mind when he comes across the disparaging references of the contemporary press to the needy position of Prince Leopold. In rank and birth the Prince was the equal of the Princess, and perfectly eligible as a husband.

The Princess took a very pronounced step in notifying her sentiments. The negotiations for the Dutch marriage were in progress when Princess Charlotte cut them short by quitting her father's palace, joining her mother at her separate residence at Blackheath, and notifying the Prince of Orange that "the union could not be thought of." When Prince Leopold left London to attend the Congress at Vienna, no definite engagement between him and the Princess had been contracted, but it was commonly known that he had gained the affections of the Princess, and that, owing to the favourable impression he had made on the leading members of the English Royal Family, the Prince of Wales, now Regent for his father, George III., would offer no objection to her choice.

At Vienna Prince Leopold attracted equal attention by his personal appearance and distinction, and for his diplomatic capacity. In the tableaux vivants which were then in fashion he was specially selected for the rôle of Jupiter, and all the

chroniclers of the period refer in flattering terms to his modesty and good sense. But his chief piece of work, which revealed remarkable talent, was in inducing the Russian and Austrian Ministers to put into the treaty the paragraph saving Coburg from the selfish designs of Prussia. "From that moment," he wrote, "the Prussians showed the utmost hostility to Coburg, and never executed the part of their engagement by which they were bound to exchange the territories which had been assigned to Coburg on the Rhine against some detached territories in Saxony, which were most desirable for Coburg." Another incident of this visit was the marriage of his brother Ferdinand with the Princess of Kohary, one of the richest of Hungarian noble families.

But the return of Napoleon from Elba again called the nations to arms, and the Princes and Generals hastened from Vienna to attend to more pressing and congenial duties. The Waterloo campaign followed, and at the end of July Prince Leopold was in Paris. To quote his own words, "he remained there occupied with political affairs, and obtained for his brother an augmentation of territory. He was treated in the most courteous manner by the English. The Duke of Kent, by the medium of an officer devoted to his service, facilitated the Prince's communications with the Princess Charlotte, who showed a disposition to remain unshaken in her resolution. The Princess and her friends desired that the Prince should come to England. But he, for fear of making things worse, owing to the unfortunate situation existing between the Princess's parents, thought the Regent should not be set at defiance, and waited. The Princess considered that he showed an excessive prudence, and was not pleased, but the course of events proved that the Prince had been wise to show patience."

Early in 1816 the Prince Regent then invited him to England, and after the necessary preliminaries had been arranged, including the conferring of a royal title and a pension of £50,000 a year, the marriage was celebrated in the evening of 2nd May, 1816, at Carlton House. The marriage was extremely popular, and raised great enthusiasm, the Princess Charlotte being idolised by the people, and the Prince attracting much atten-

tion by his pleasant manners and good looks. It may be noted as a curious coincidence that King Louis Philippe, then Duke d'Orleans, whose daughter was destined to be Prince Leopold's second wife, was present at this marriage. Napoleon, in his *Memoirs* at St. Helena, comments on this wedding, and incidentally remarks: "The Princess Charlotte fixed upon Prince Leopold by her own free choice alone. The Prince pleased her mightily. I can easily believe it, for, if I remember rightly, he was the handsomest young man I saw at the Tuileries."

The marriage, which, while it lasted, was of ideal happiness, proved all too brief. On 5th November, 1817, the Princess Charlotte died in childbed at Claremont, where they had fixed their home. Prince Leopold's hopes of happiness were thus wrecked. He wrote in his *Notes*, already cited: "November saw the ruin of this happy home and the destruction at one blow of every hope and happiness of Prince Leopold. He has never recovered the feeling of happiness which had blessed his short married life. She died on the 5th in childbed, a few hours after the birth of a still-born son. Had she been skilfully treated, her life at least would have been spared."

After the death of the Princess, Prince Leopold continued to live at Claremont in absolute retirement, devoting himself to the completion of her favourite projects. During this period his widowed sister, the Princess of Leiningen, married the Duke of Kent, brother of the Prince Regent, and came to reside in England. There was one child of this union—the little Princess who was destined to be Queen Victoria of immortal memory. Prince Leopold, who had been deprived by a harsh decree of Fate from training his own son for the difficult duties of ruler of the British realm, derived some consolation in exercising the beneficial influence of his noble character and wide culture on the impressionable mind of his little niece, who more than a generation later expressed her gratitude when she lost him in the touching tribute, "To one who had stood to her in the place of a father." It is, perhaps, not generally known that for five years after the death of the Duke of Kent the Duchess and the Princess Victoria were

totally unprovided for by the nation, and lived with Prince Leopold at Claremont. As the Princess grew up, it became a common charge in political circles to accuse Prince Leopold of desiring to be Regent of England in the event of the Duke of Clarence's death preceding that of George IV.

As a matter of fact, Prince Leopold was turning over in his mind various schemes for obtaining a new vent for his activities. He travelled in different parts of Europe, and renewed his acquaintance with different personages, among others Prince William of Prussia, long afterwards first German Emperor, whom he called the best friend of his youth. As early as 1825 the Greeks wanted the Prince to become their King, but Canning, who was a friend, dissuaded him from accepting, alleging that the situation was too uncertain. After the treaty of Adrianople the proposal was renewed, and as a State called Greece had actually come into existence, the old objection no longer applied. Unfortunately, Canning died, just as Greek emancipation was attained, and the Duke of Wellington came into power with Lord Aberdeen at the Foreign Office. These Ministers were very much under the influence of Prince Metternich, who wished to curtail the limits of the new Kingdom of Greece. On the other hand, the Greeks wanted as extended a dominion as they could get.

The frontiers of the new Kingdom were one matter, the selection of the King was another. France and Russia approved of Prince Leopold, the Greeks wanted him; and at last, in January, 1830, after some hesitation, the Duke of Wellington decided in his favour also. But precious time had been lost, and the question of the frontier had been compromised. Prince Leopold expressed his willingness to accept the throne, but only on the condition that the Greeks should freely elect him, and that the frontier should be rectified. He also considered that Crete and the Ionian Isles ought to belong to Greece. The three protecting Powers—*i.e.*, England, France, and Russia—made some trivial concessions, and then, without awaiting his formal consent, proclaimed Prince Leopold Sovereign of Greece.

The nomination of Prince Leopold evoked great satisfaction.

The Prussian Minister, Baron von Stein, whose system had baffled Napoleon, sent him his congratulations in a remarkable letter, from which the reader will see what was thought of Prince Leopold's capacity by those who had met him—

“The election of your Royal Highness has answered the expectations of all the friends of Greece, because the choice has fallen on a Prince of illustrious birth, of cool and reflecting mind, and with personal experience of eventful affairs—a Prince who can win hearts and appease passions, and who possesses a power of gentle persuasion, and who is, moreover, perfectly acquainted with the political institutions of constitutional countries, independent of foreign influence, and for that very reason in a position to study only the interests of his country.”*

But Prince Leopold had not accepted the crown bestowed upon him. He saw quite clearly that he was being led into a false position, that the Greeks would regard him not merely as being forced upon them, but as acquiescing in the dismemberment of their Kingdom. He wrote : “The Powers will guarantee but little more than half what I ask ; on such terms I will not accept. It may end in a rupture. I care not, as I am consistent with myself.” It is not necessary to refer further to the negotiations, sometimes tortuous, sometimes contradictory, that followed. Prince Leopold declined the throne in the following note, dated 15th May, 1830 :

When the undersigned had an idea of becoming Sovereign of Greece, it was in the hope of being accepted freely and unanimously by the Greek nation, and of being welcomed as the friend who would repay them for their long and heroic struggle by assuring them their territories and establishing their independence upon a permanent and honourable basis. It is with the most profound regret that the undersigned sees his hopes deceived and himself forced to declare that the arrangements concluded by the Allied Powers, together with the opposition of the Greeks, by depriving him of the power of attaining that sacred and glorious end, would impose upon him a duty of a very different nature, that, in fact, of one delegated by the Allied Powers to hold the Greeks in subjection by force of arms. Such a mission would be as contrary to his feelings and injurious to his character as it is diametrically opposed to the object of the treaty of 6th July, whereby the three Powers (England, France, and Russia) united for the purpose of obtaining the pacifi-

* This opinion is in striking contrast with the very shallow man-about-town view of Charles Greville in his *Memoirs*, to which the editor, Mr. Henry Reeve, felt compelled to add a correcting footnote.

cation of the East. Consequently the undersigned formally resigns into the hands of the Plenipotentiaries a trust which circumstances do not any longer permit him to undertake with honour to himself and advantage to Greece and the general interests of Europe."

Leopold was misunderstood and traduced at the time, but history has rendered him justice. He was right where others were wrong, he was consistent where no one cared a jot for consistency, and the Greek state that eventually emerged from "his weary work," to use his own phrase, was all the larger and stronger. The efforts made from different quarters to induce him to change his decision failed, and on 21st May, 1830, Prince Leopold drafted his final renunciation of the Greek throne.

The negotiations with regard to Greece led to nothing in the life of Prince Leopold, but they probably induced him to think that he might find a useful career, and a field of action worthy of his ability, in guiding the affairs of one or other of the European nationalities then struggling for the free right to govern themselves. The struggle of Greece for independence ended, and then that of Belgium began. Prince Leopold naturally became interested in the development of the question, obtained all the information it was possible at the moment to acquire, and received from more than one quarter a suggestion that in Belgium he might find consolation for his Greek disappointment.

But in England he received no such encouragement. Everyone was attached to the cause of the King of the Netherlands, and to the person of the Prince of Orange. In Belgium opinion was certainly hostile on commercial grounds, there being an inevitable competition between the Scheldt and the Thames, to the choice of an English Prince, and Prince Leopold was then and long after regarded as such. In December, 1830, M. Paul Devaux brought the Prince's name before the Congress as that of a highly suitable candidate. A little later M. Devaux admitted that, owing to the opposition of France, Prince Leopold's candidature was impossible for the moment. It has never been made clear why the French Government objected to Prince Leopold in January, 1831, more especially as the proposal was coupled with his marriage to a French

Princess, and this opposition was long regarded as proof of its desire to see the Duc de Nemours elected. The probability is that Prince Leopold was considered at Paris to be too much in sympathy with Prussia. It must also be remembered that at this time Prince Leopold was practically unknown in Belgium, and had, consequently, no public following there. Then came in their order, as already described, the election of the Duc de Nemours, the Orange plots, and the uncertainty in the country which brought it to the verge of anarchy.

The following extract from M. A. Gendebien's *Historical Revelations touching the Revolution of 1830* throws some light on the uncertainty prevailing in Paris as to what was France's best policy. It deals with a conversation between M. Gendebien and Count Sebastiani, the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

M. GENDEBIEN : " Whom do you recommend ? Prince Otto of Bavaria or a Neapolitan Prince—both mere children ! Two children to realise for us, to guarantee for us at home and abroad the results of our Revolution ! The candidatures of the Duc de Nemours and of the Prince of Saxe-Coburg are alone worth thinking about, yet you reject both absolutely. There is but one way for us out of the perilous position in which your double refusal places us : to go to London and propose the candidature of Prince Leopold and a French marriage ; and if the King of the French persists in his refusal we will go a step farther—we will take Prince Leopold without the French Princess."

SEBASTIANI, rising angrily : " If Saxe-Coburg sets foot in Belgium we will fire on him."—" Very well, we will beg England to return your fire !"—" There will be a general war."—" So be it ; we prefer war, even a general war, to endless humiliation."

M. Gendebien was not a good statesman in thinking that a general war, arising from a difference between France and England, would have helped his country. It would have signified the ruin of Belgian hopes, which could only be realised by the combined and cordial action of France and England together. The policy of the Dutch Government throughout the long contention was based on the belief that

harmony in the relations of the two historic rivals was unattainable. If the extreme measures proposed by some of the Belgian leaders had been taken, there would have been a rupture between the two countries, and the authority of the House of Orange would have been restored over the Southern Netherlands. The hesitation of France in January, 1831, followed by what may be termed her tacit acquiescence in the Nemours candidature in February, undoubtedly injured Belgium. Prince Leopold always held that the delay in his nomination entailed difficulties and troubles for Belgium that might have been averted, but for this he rightly held France not alone to blame. He said to one of his Ministers : " Prince Talleyrand, France and the Belgians must reproach one another."

Another change in the situation has to be noted. The London Conference, prior to the election of the Duc de Nemours, had abstained from fettering the Belgian people in any way in their choice of a Prince. The Protocols never alluded to the subject. But on 19th February, after the Duc de Nemours' refusal had been arranged, the Conference declared that " the Sovereign of Belgium must be one who by his position corresponded with the principle of Belgium's neutral position, and who gave the other States some assurance as to the security of their rights and interests."

Under these circumstances, and by the force of events, the Belgian leaders were compelled to abandon all fanciful theories, and to face the hard facts of the situation. The independence of Belgium in April, 1831, had become wrapped up for all practical purposes in the election of Prince Leopold. What was needed was to bring the Belgian delegates, among whom Prince Leopold was the least known and, on account of his English connections, the least popular of all possible candidates, round to this view. In attaining this object, M. Lebeau, who had become Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Regent's second Ministry, and M. Paul Devaux, took the leading part.

On 12th April negotiations were opened with Prince Leopold in a semi-official manner, but Lord Ponsonby refrained from being himself the intermediary. He, however, allowed his secretary, Mr. Charles White, to communicate the offer to

Sir Edward Cust, one of the Prince's equerries. At the same time General Belliard, the French envoy, notified the Belgian Government that France would not oppose Prince Leopold's election. Thanks to M. Casimir Perier's enlightened policy, the two countries most vitally concerned had come together. The election of Prince Leopold was now only a question of time. The sturdy refusal of the Belgians to accept the two January Protocols imported some delay into the negotiations, for Lord Palmerston refused to recognise the Regent's Government until it had ratified them. Lord Palmerston, however, was entirely free of the Orange proclivities of Wellington and Aberdeen. He was cordially in favour of Prince Leopold as the very best candidate for the throne.

On 20th April a Belgian Commission was sent to London headed by Count Felix de Mérode to negotiate with Prince Leopold. Two days later an interview took place at Marlborough House, and the Prince, after commenting on some of the obstacles in the Constitution itself to his acceptance unless he were assured that they might be modified by the light of experience, went on to point out some other reasons against his immediate assent. These reasons arose out of the disaccord between the Conference and the Belgians themselves as to the proper extent of their territory, and were expressed as follows :

“ To make my election possible for myself and useful for you, it must carry with it the solution of your territorial and financial difficulties. Belgium and her King must be in a position to be recognised by Europe. I could not accept the sovereignty of a State whose territory is disputed by all the Powers. This would be, without any service to you, to place myself, the moment I set my foot on Belgian soil, in a state of hostility with all the world. It is, therefore, impossible for me to give you an answer to-day, but all my ambition is to promote the happiness of my fellows. Young as I still am, I have been in so many extraordinary and difficult positions that I have learned to regard power only from a philosophical point of view. I never desired it but for the sake of doing good and the good that lasts. Yet I feel how desirable it is

for Belgium to have a Head as soon as possible ; the very peace of Europe is involved in it."

The negotiations continued, but, as in the case of Greece, Prince Leopold was reluctant to accept until the territorial question had been settled, for he said, if the necessity arose later on of surrendering territory to which the Belgians were attached, but which the Powers would not accord (a contingency which actually occurred), he would incur unpopularity as the Prince identified with the loss of some cherished province or part of it. The Belgian Commissioners could not remove the Prince's doubts, because the Belgian Congress would not accept the last Protocols. The deadlock threatened to continue, and M. Devaux was sent to London on behalf of the Government of which he was a member, to see what could be done. He received Prince Leopold's assurance that he was willing to accept the throne, but that two preliminaries had first to be settled. They were the extent and limits of the territory constituting the new Kingdom of Belgium, and the placing of her relations with the Powers on a regular and recognised basis.

At this stage the Conference again took steps to assert its dignity. A fresh Protocol on 17th April declared that its predecessors of 20th and 27th January were "fundamental and irrevocable," but owing to the negotiations with Prince Leopold the Conference held back this Protocol until 10th May. Finding that they were not progressing in the sense it wished, it ordered Lord Ponsonby, its representative in Brussels, to present this Protocol to the Belgian Government before 1st June. The Protocol was really an ultimatum, and rode rough-shod over Belgian rights and susceptibilities, and it is to Lord Ponsonby's credit that, instead of obeying his orders literally, he came to London and made strong representations in behalf of the Belgian case. The Plenipotentiaries knew something about the state of Europe and the relations of the Powers, but they had taken no trouble to possess themselves of the views of the Belgians themselves. They were sufficiently moved by Lord Ponsonby's representations to issue a further Protocol on 21st May, in which they held out the possibility of the Powers

negotiating with King William for the surrender of the whole of the Grand Duchy to Belgium against an indemnity.

Lord Ponsonby returned to Brussels, but instead of presenting the Protocol he addressed a letter to the Government dealing with the whole question at the moment. The language of the letter was not fortunate, and might be regarded as threatening, which was probably not the writer's intention, although he, like many others, had become impatient of a settlement. Lord Ponsonby's letter was read to the Congress on 28th May by M. Lebeau, who a few days before had commenced the steps necessary for bringing forward in a formal manner the candidature of Prince Leopold. Lord Ponsonby declared that the Prince was now disposed to take upon himself as Sovereign the completion of the Luxembourg matter. He also asked, Why should any Belgian wish to get Luxembourg by war when it could be got for a thousandth part of its cost? The letter was a distinct infraction of the independence of the Belgian nation, and more than one of the passages* roused the anger of the audience; but the Government skilfully solved the difficulty by bringing in a motion that the election of any Head of the State should be declared null and void if acceptance were made dependent on the cession of Limburg and Luxembourg.

Fortunately Prince Leopold's candidature, although momentarily imperilled by Lord Ponsonby's indiscretion, had reached too advanced a stage to be rendered unsuccessful. The prolonged uncertainty had led to an augmentation of the Republican faction in Belgium, and the only opposition came from that quarter. Some members also demurred to Prince Leopold because he was not a Catholic, but they were the exception, for the Catholic party as a whole voted solidly for the Prince. The ballot taken on 4th June, in a Chamber where 196 members were present out of the total 200, gave Prince Leopold 152 votes against 44 dissentients. The

* Among the passages which most offended Belgian *amour propre* were the following: "By what principle of reason would Belgium wish to put herself in a different position from other nations? Why should she claim an exclusive privilege of dictating to the nations about the disputed territory? I am sure Belgians will not rush into difficulties that might lead to the extinction of the Belgian name."

dissentients were not personally hostile to Prince Leopold; they were the devotees of Republican simplicity. The President declared the Prince formally elected King of the Belgians subject to his accepting the Constitution and maintaining the integrity of the territory.

A Belgian delegation was then sent to London to notify his election to the Prince, and at the same time MM. Devaux and Nothomb were commissioned to open negotiations with the Conference on the subject of the unsettled questions. Prince Leopold lent the Commissioners all the aid of his influence and experience, and soon, thanks to his tact and energy, the negotiations took a favourable turn. Lord Palmerston adopted a benevolent attitude towards Belgian aspirations, and, waiving the facts that the Protocols were still unaccepted, and that in consequence of that non-acceptance he had acquiesced in the recall of Lord Ponsonby and Count Belliard from Brussels, he negotiated and brought to fruition an entirely new arrangement. This might be termed the preliminaries for the conclusion of a definitive peace with Holland on the basis of Prince Leopold's accession to the Belgian throne. It also regularised the diplomatic position, substituting a new and accepted treaty for the Protocols which had not been accepted by the Belgians, and thus sparing their susceptibilities in every possible way. The negotiations terminated on 24th June, and on the 26th Eighteen Articles were signed by the five Plenipotentiaries as their 26th Protocol, and handed to the Belgian representatives.

The same evening the representatives of the Belgian Congress, headed by its President, M. de Gerlache, waited on the Prince at his town residence, Marlborough House, to present him formally with the Decree summoning him to the Belgian throne. M. de Gerlache said in his address :

"It is a rare and noble spectacle in the annals of nations when four millions of free men, with one accord and of their own free-will, offer a crown to a Prince born far away from them, and whom they know solely by the fame of his excellent qualities. Your Royal Highness is worthy of this summons, worthy of replying to this mark of confidence. The happiness

of Belgium, and perhaps the peace of all Europe, are now in your hands. As the meed of a noble resolution, sir, we are not afraid to promise you glory, the blessings of a good and true people ever attached to their Heads so long as their rights have been respected, and, finally, a memory dear to the most remote posterity."

The Prince replied as follows :

" I am deeply sensible of the meaning of the vote of which the Belgian Congress has made you the interpreters. The mark of confidence is the more flattering as it was not sought by me. There is in human destiny no task more noble or useful than to be called upon to maintain the independence and consolidate the liberties of a nation. A mission of such importance must of itself decide me to give up a position of independence and separate myself even from a country to which I have been attached by the most sacred ties and recollections, and which has given me so many proofs of sympathy. I accept, then, gentlemen, the offer you make, with the understanding that *it shall devolve upon the Congress of the representatives of the nation to accept those measures which alone can establish the new State, and thereby insure recognition from the States of Europe.* It is only by doing so that the Congress will give me the means of devoting myself entirely to Belgium, and of dedicating to its well-being and prosperity the connections I have formed in the countries whose friendship is essential for her, and of insuring for her, so far as it will depend on my co-operation, an independent and happy existence."

At the same time Prince Leopold expressed his willingness to come to Belgium immediately on the adoption by the Congress of the Protocol enumerating the Eighteen Articles. The Belgian Commissioners set out on their return journey the same night as the interview at Marlborough House, and reached Brussels in the evening of the next day. The only question that remained to be decided was, Would the Belgian Congress, which had withheld its sanction to the Protocols of January, and which had not been cowed by the threat of a European ultimatum, accept the Eighteen Articles? The following is the full text of this historical document :

THE Conference, animated with a desire to remove the difficulties which still retard the conclusion of the affairs of Belgium, has thought that the following Articles, which might form the preliminaries of a treaty of peace, would contribute to this end. It has therefore resolved to propose them to the two parties.

Art. 1.—The limits of Holland shall comprehend all the territories, fortresses, towns, and places which belonged to the former Republic of the United Provinces of the Netherlands in the year 1790.

Art. 2.—Belgium shall be formed of all the other territories which received the denomination of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the treaties of 1815.

Art. 3.—The five Powers will employ their good offices that the Duchy of Luxembourg may remain *in statu quo* during the course of the separate negotiation which the Sovereign of Belgium will open with the King of the Netherlands, and with the German Confederation, respecting the Grand Duchy, which negotiation is distinct from the question of the boundaries between Holland and Belgium. It is understood that the fortress of Luxembourg shall preserve a free communication with Germany.

Art. 4.—If it is found that the Republic of the United Provinces of the Netherlands did not exclusively exercise the sovereignty of Maestricht in 1790, the two parties shall consider the means of making an amicable arrangement on this subject.

Art. 5.—As it would result from the basis laid down in Articles 1 and 2 that Holland and Belgium would possess districts surrounded by the respective territories of each other, such exchanges as may be thought useful to both parties shall be amicably made between Holland and Belgium.

Art. 6.—The reciprocal evacuation of the territories, towns, and fortresses shall take place independently of the arrangements relative to the exchanges.

Art. 7.—It is understood that the regulations of Articles 108 to 117, inclusive of the general Act of the Congress of Vienna relative to the free navigation of the navigable rivers, shall be applied to those rivers which pass through the territories of Holland and Belgium.

Art. 8.—Dutch and Belgian commissioners shall meet at Maestricht as soon as possible for the demarcation of the territories. They shall also discuss the exchanges to be made according to Article 5.

Art. 9.—Belgium, within the limits traced in conformity with the principles laid down in the present preliminaries, shall form a perpetually neutral State. The five Powers, without wishing to intervene in the internal affairs of Belgium, guarantee her that perpetual neutrality, as well as the integrity and inviolability of her territory in the limits mentioned in the present Article.

Art. 10.—By just reciprocity Belgium shall be held to observe this same neutrality towards all the other States, and to make no attack on their internal or external tranquillity, whilst always preserving the right to defend herself against every foreign aggression.

Art. 11.—The port of Antwerp shall continue to be solely a commercial port, according to Article 15 of the Treaty of Paris of 30th May, 1814.

Art. 12.—The division of the debt shall be made in such a manner that the whole of the debts before the union shall fall upon the country by which they were contracted, and those contracted since the union shall be divided in a just proportion.

Art. 13.—Commissioners shall be immediately appointed to settle this matter, so that Belgium may provisionally furnish its portion of the interest of the debt.

Art. 14.—The prisoners of war on both sides shall be set at liberty fifteen days after the adoption of these Articles.

Art. 15.—The sequestration of private property in the two countries shall be immediately removed.

Art. 16.—No inhabitant of the territories, towns, and fortresses reciprocally evacuated shall be molested for his past political conduct.

Art. 17.—The five Powers reserve to themselves the right of giving their good offices when they shall be required by the parties interested.

Art. 18.—The Articles reciprocally adopted shall be converted into a definitive treaty.

These Articles were more favourable to the Belgians than were the Protocols which they replaced, and they spared their susceptibilities by no longer insisting on their accepting proposals which they had rejected. But it was perfectly clear that the rejection of the Articles would create a situation full of peril, and at the same time destroy all chance of Prince Leopold accepting the throne.

The Foreign Minister, M. Lebeau, read the text of the Eighteen Articles to the Congress, and declared the Government to be unanimous in its recommendation to accept them. With regard to Belgian pretensions, he pointed out that the most important were left open for future discussion, negotiation, and arrangement. The claims to Luxembourg and Maestricht would form the subject of direct negotiation between Belgium and Holland, and then, in a burst of confidence in Prince Leopold's tact and wisdom, he added: "Leave the matter to Prince Leopold, and he will realise our dearest wishes." The admission that there were blocks of Belgian territory (enclaves) situated within the Dutch provinces was also encouraging, for it seemed to foreshadow a solution on the basis of an exchange of territory. Finally, the adjustment of the debt was to be effected on far more favourable lines to Belgium than had been proposed.

A long and sometimes heated debate followed. There were some enthusiastic advocates of an absolutely intact Belgium who declared that it was better to lose all than surrender a fragment of the Belgic provinces, and who protested that they would defy Europe and die in the last ditch for their country's independence. This ebullition of national spirit surprised observers who had not grasped the fact that the Belgians were, after all, a race apart and distinct from either of their neigh-



BARON SURLET DE CHOKIER.



bours, and furnished the final refutation of Talleyrand's cynicism. But it was an occasion for the display over every other quality of common sense, and after many days' debate common sense prevailed on 9th July, when the Congress accepted the Articles by a vote of 126 ayes to 70 noes.

A deputation, headed on this occasion by M. Lebeau, who resigned the Foreign Ministry on the completion of his task, set out for London to acquaint Prince Leopold with the fact that the condition upon which his acceptance had been given was fulfilled, and that no obstacle remained to prevent his coming to Belgium. When this intimation reached him, Prince Leopold, with the prudence and caution that had characterised his proceedings throughout the long and delicate negotiations, expressed a desire to receive the Plenipotentiaries of the Powers in the first place. They called on him at Marlborough House in the afternoon of 12th July, and the question he addressed to them was: "Is it the intention of the Great Powers to recognise me at once? Will they recognise me if I go to Belgium without waiting for the adhesion of the King of Holland?" The answer of the members of the London Conference was rendered doubly significant because it was made by the representative of Russia, the Power most in sympathy with Holland. Baron Matuszewicz replied: "In any case, and if the King of Holland refuses, we will find means to make him consent."

In the evening of the same day Prince Leopold received the Belgian delegates, who handed him a letter from the Regent, Baron Surlet de Chokier, in which he begged the Prince to "come as soon as possible, and crown the hopes and calm the fears of the Belgian people."

Three days later Prince Leopold left London accompanied by Sir Henry Seton, his personal aide-de-camp; M. Van Praet, the Belgian diplomatist, whom he attached to his person as private secretary; and the members of the Belgian delegation. Prince Leopold, now become King, was accorded royal honours. On leaving Dover in the afternoon of 16th July, the forts fired a royal salute, and, what was equally auspicious, the French forts at Calais saluted him in the same fashion on his

steamer entering the harbour. It was a happy thought that the new Sovereign, instead of proceeding direct to Ostend, should enter Belgium through France, the Power whose sympathies had been with the Belgian people throughout their long struggle.

In closing this chapter, there is one gross misconception and misrepresentation prevalent that calls for emphatic refutation. No one has yet succeeded in providing an infallible means of tracing calumny and slander to its primal source. The little originating lie or slander is buried in the rubbish-heap out of which a mountain of prejudice, misrepresentation, and ill-natured gossip has grown. But if the origin of the perversion of truth cannot be discovered, there are fortunately means of ascertaining the truth by all who will take a little trouble. The matter to which reference is here made is a case in point. Prince Leopold, as the husband of Princess Charlotte, daughter of the Prince Regent (afterwards King George IV.), and heiress-presumptive to the throne of England, received an allowance of £50,000 a year from the British Government. It has been frequently represented and widely believed that he continued to draw this pension until the day of his death in 1865. With the refinement of maliciousness, it has even been affirmed that the private fortune which he accumulated was derived from this very pension.

A more wicked, a more baseless slander could not be invented.

The day before he sailed from Dover Prince Leopold wrote a letter to Lord Grey, which that nobleman read in the House of Lords, renouncing the pension he received as an English Prince, and stating that "as Sovereign of Belgium, it is my intention not to take out of England any portion of the revenue which was granted me by Act of Parliament at the time of my marriage."

CHAPTER VIII.

War between Belgium and Holland.

ON 17th July, 1831, Prince Leopold entered Belgium, being received at the frontier by a deputation sent to meet and welcome him in the name of the Regent. The weather was most auspicious; the Prince, by his splendid appearance and frank manner, made a most favourable impression on his audience, and was in his turn encouraged and flattered by the confidence and cordiality revealed in the open and honest countenances of his future subjects. The new ruler, in an open carriage drawn by postilions, drove through West Flanders, past Furnes and Ostend, to Bruges, where he spent the night. The whole population turned out in their thousands to line the road and give him a hearty welcome. It was known that he was a Lutheran Prince, but this made no difference to the hearts of one of the most Catholic races of Europe. For the moment patriotism triumphed over every other sentiment, and the Flemings hailed him as the deliverer of their country.

The journey was resumed on the following day, and the enthusiasm was not less in East Flanders than it had been in West. When it was suggested to him that, as there were many Orangists in Ghent, it might be well to choose another route, in order to avoid a hostile demonstration, the Prince exclaimed: "There is all the more reason for going by Ghent." At the city associated with the names of the Artevelde and John of Lancaster the reception of the new ruler was even more enthusiastic than it had been at Bruges and Ostend. One of the members of the Government who accompanied the cortège described the scene as follows:

"Certainly one could not but admire the splendour and

unanimity of the manifestations in the towns which the royal party passed through, but what raised most emotion was the reception which the Sovereign met with in the country. When one saw a village pastor with white hair and venerable face come to salute in the person of a Lutheran Prince the protector of Belgian independence, the restorer of that Belgian nationality which had been so long oppressed, this mixture of a patriotism which was connected with the traditions of the past and of a tolerance which belonged to the Liberal principles of the Revolution of 1830 made a deep impression upon the witnesses of so admirable a sight. When, further, one saw the branches of trees and the garlands which adorned the cabins scattered over the highroads, when one remarked the simple and spontaneous joy of the poor inhabitants flocking to the thresholds of their cottages, one might say that the people instinctively understood the nature of the occasion. They felt that this Prince, elected by the suffrages of the National Assembly, was bringing back confidence, peace, security, commerce, and public and private prosperity. One could also recognise in these populations of Flanders and Brabant flocking out to meet the King that old respect of monarchical power which the Belgian people have always known how to unite with an invincible love of freedom."

This triumphal procession terminated with the arrival at the château of Laeken late at night on 19th July. It was arranged that the next day should be one of rest and preparation, and that the solemn entry into Brussels, followed by the inauguration of Leopold as King of the Belgians, should be made on the 21st. It is stated that on the 20th the Prince prepared the speech he proposed to deliver after taking his oath as Sovereign, submitted it to M. Lebeau, who made only a few verbal changes therein, and conversed with several members of the Government on the general situation. Someone noted at the time Prince Leopold's avidity to be supplied with facts, and although there was at the moment no apprehension of hostilities, he was particularly earnest in his inquiries about the state of the army in whose "courage and fidelity" he declared that he placed his entire trust.

A very long period had elapsed since the good people of Brussels had witnessed one of those public fêtes in which from old time they delighted. The civic life of the capital had been chilled by the gravity of events, and the trade and commerce of the city had been depressed and diminished by the absence of a Court. The advent of the new King, therefore, was hailed nowhere with more lively and genuine satisfaction than in the famous city of the Dukes of Brabant. Prince Leopold, who was an accomplished horseman, elected to make his entry on horseback, and, surrounded by a brilliant staff, he rode from Laeken, entering Brussels by the gate of that name, and proceeding through the densely crowded streets to the Place Royale in the upper town, which was the spot fixed for the ceremony of his mounting the throne. The modern Place Royale occupies the site of the railed-in square (Cour des Bailles) in front of the old palace of the Netherlands, where, before its destruction by fire in the 18th century, the Proclamations of the Sovereigns had been made from time immemorial. On its eastern side stands the Church of St. Jacques sur Caudenberg, which still preserves the name of the hill on which the Dukes of Brabant erected their fortress home. Here in front of the church portals an elaborate and richly decorated stand in the form of a semicircle had been erected. In the centre, raised above the other seats, a throne had been placed under a canopy of crimson and gold, but in the earlier stages of the ceremony it was screened from view by a curtain.

The streets were densely crowded, not only with Brussels citizens, but with visitors from all the neighbouring towns. The public enthusiasm was raised to the highest point by the thoughts and hopes of the occasion, and the new ruler received an ovation without a flaw. He was given every reason to believe that his election had been brought about, as he stipulated, by the unanimous wishes of his future subjects.

The ceremony in the Place Royale was simple and dignified. In the first stage the Prince, having dismounted, took his place on the stand immediately below the curtained throne with the Regent, Baron Surlet de Chokier, on one side of him, and the President of the Chamber, Baron de Gerlache, on the other.

The proceedings began with the formal resignation of his office by the Regent. Then one of the secretaries read the text of the Constitution, and on that being finished another read out the form of, or, as we would say, administered, the oath to be taken by the King. This done, King Leopold, speaking for the first time as King of the Belgians, said in a loud and clear voice : “ I swear to observe the Constitution and laws of the Belgian people, and to maintain the national independence and the integrity of the territory.” As he signed the oath the curtain was drawn back, the throne exposed to view, and Baron de Gerlache, as President of the National Congress, said : “ Sire, ascend the throne !” Having first taken his seat, King Leopold then rose and delivered his inaugural speech, which ran as follows :

“ The alacrity with which I set foot upon Belgian soil must have convinced you that, faithful to my word, I deferred coming to you only until I had seen you yourselves remove the obstacles which hindered my accession to the throne. The different considerations unfolded in the important debate which brought about the result will be the object of my liveliest solicitude. I have met since my entrance upon Belgian soil proofs of touching kindness. I am still equally moved by them and gratified for them. At the sight of those populations ratifying by their cheers the act of the national representatives, I felt that I was called by the wish of the country, and I understood all the obligations that such a reception imposes upon me. Belgian as I am by your adoption, I shall make it a law to myself to be so also in my policy. I was likewise received with extreme kindness in the part of the French territory I traversed, and I fancied I saw in those demonstrations, which I highly value, a happy presage of the confident and friendly relations which should exist between the two countries. The effect of all political commotion is to damage for the time being material interests. I understand their importance too well not to give my immediate attention to helping by the most active solicitude to rehabilitate commerce and industry, those vivifying principles of national prosperity ; but I like to think that the Belgian people, so remarkable at the

same time for right feeling and for resignation, will make allowances for the Government on the difficulties of a position which is due to the state of uneasiness with which almost all Europe is afflicted. I intend to surround myself with all possible lights, to draw forth all views tending to amelioration, and it is on the very spot, just as I have begun to do, that I mean to gather the best notions to shed light in this respect upon the course of the Government.

“Gentlemen, I only accepted the crown you offered me with the view of fulfilling a task as honourable as it is useful, that of being called upon to consolidate the institutions and maintain the independence of a noble people. My heart knows no other ambition than that of rendering you happy. I must on so solemnly touching an occasion express to you one of my most ardent wishes. The nation is issuing from a violent crisis. May this day efface all hatred, extinguish all resentment ! I shall esteem myself fortunate in contributing to this happy result, so well prepared for by the wisdom of the venerable man who devoted himself with such noble patriotism to the salvation of his country. Gentlemen, I hope to be to Belgium a pledge of peace and tranquillity, but the previsions of man are not infallible. If in spite of so many sacrifices for the preservation of peace we were threatened with war, I should not hesitate to appeal to the courage of the Belgian people, and I hope they would rally one and all round their Head for the defence of the country and the rational independence.”

The day's ceremonies concluded with a banquet at the Palace, when King Leopold proposed a toast to “the future of Belgium, and may it be one of happiness and independence !” These auspicious proceedings had a dark sequel. No one thought at the moment, when Belgium seemed to have at last overcome all her difficulties and realised her destiny, that she was on the eve of the greatest troubles and humiliation that befell her during the Revolution. The rude and severe lesson that she is about to receive stands as a warning for all nations who allow their ideals to grow without providing the power necessary to enforce them, and who permit external peril to find them in a state of unpreparedness.

Leopold's first task was to form his new Ministry, and to arrange for the convocation of the Chambers in accordance with the terms of the Constitution. His first Ministry was composed of moderate men who had taken only a minor part in the events of the time, and it must be admitted that none of them rose to any high distinction. M. de Muelenaere was entrusted with foreign affairs, and General du Failly retained the War Ministry until the discovery of the totally unprepared state of the army in the hour of danger compelled his resignation. Having signed the necessary orders for these purposes, the new King decided to see those parts of the country which he had not yet visited, and one week after his inauguration he set out on a tour to Antwerp, Liège, and Namur. He wished to show himself to some more of his new subjects, and he also desired to see the army on which he knew he must in the last resort depend. It was essential for him to learn accurately what was its strength, its state of organisation, and its fighting value. General du Failly had shown him on paper an army of 68,000 men. It was natural that he should like to see them at their posts, and to feel assured that they really existed.

The Belgian troops were divided at the time into two armies—one of the Scheldt, with its headquarters at Antwerp, under General Tieken de Terhove, and the other of the Meuse, quartered in and round Hasselt, and commanded by General Daine. It was perfectly clear at a glance, without even seeing the troops, that the strategical position was exceedingly faulty. In the event of fresh hostilities all the Dutch commanders would have to do would be to strike at the gap between the two Belgian armies, destroy all possibility of their junction, and march straight for Louvain and Brussels. But, then, the last thing in the world that the Belgians were expecting was the resumption of hostilities on a serious scale.

King Leopold visited Antwerp, and was received with the same popular enthusiasm as in Brussels. He reviewed General Tieken's army. He found it to be half its nominal strength, ill-equipped, with scarcely any artillery and no cavalry. The spirit of the men seemed good, and that was all. At Hasselt he reviewed General Daine's force. Here the organisation was



M. JOSEPH LEBEAU.



even worse than at Antwerp, and the strength of the two corps combined did not reach 25,000 men in lieu of the 68,000 men at which they were counted. The only hope was that no occasion would arise for putting these half-trained levies to any severe test. King Leopold continued his tour, and reached Liège on 1st August.

Vague rumours had for some days been reaching King Leopold from England, as well as from Holland, that King William intended to cut the Gordian knot of his Belgian troubles with the sword, but their sudden confirmation by General Chassé's curt notice of his intention to resume hostilities by his Sovereign's order in the evening of 4th August was wholly unexpected. The news of this intention was only received in London on the eve of the expiry of the brief term of four days' notice given by the Dutch commander. King Leopold himself only received the declaration a few hours earlier at Liège. M. Lebeau, having resigned office, had returned to Liège to practise his profession in the Appeal Court, and King Leopold asked him his advice. Handing him General Chassé's notice, His Majesty said : " See what I get by way of welcome ! Still, if I could have given a few months to the organisation of the army I should not fear the struggle. Perhaps it would be rather a matter of congratulation, for a success would increase the attachment of the army and the country to their nascent nationality and to the leader who had fought at their head. But to have been caught so unprepared is very unfortunate. What do you think of the condition of the army ? Could it sustain, do you think, the shock of the enemy, and fight a pitched battle ? "

M. Lebeau replied with equal candour and sound judgment : " Sire, the army is not deficient in ardour and courage. The Civic Guard is animated by strong national sentiment, but I cannot conceal it from you that, in spite of the praiseworthy and persevering efforts of the several War Ministers since the Revolution, the new army must, in my opinion, be described as greatly lacking in organisation. We are too near a revolution which unloosed all the bonds of discipline and subordination for the army not still to feel deeply its effects. That alone

has been a great obstacle to its reorganisation. Add to this the uncertain results, even to the present time, of this very Revolution, which must have exercised a bad influence on the spirit of the army. As to the Civic Guard, I think it capable of performing wonders behind ramparts, or barricades, or entrenched in houses, if the enemy were to enter the streets of our towns; but at the same time I believe it to be incapable of supporting the shock of an attack in the open country, and of withstanding cavalry and artillery."

M. Lebeau then advised the King to send off express messengers to London and Paris, calling upon the two Powers to fulfil their promises to compel Holland to respect the new Convention called the Eighteen Articles. King Leopold, while regretting that he had no army to lead against the Dutch, acquiesced in the prudence of the advice, but he was separated from his Ministers, who were at Brussels, and without the counter-signature of a Minister he could take no step. In this dilemma M. Lebeau took upon himself the full responsibility of countersigning, declaring that he would return to office, if necessary, to secure indemnity for an unconstitutional act. Expresses were then sent off, calling on France and England to provide the stipulated armed intervention for the protection of Belgium.

There cannot be two opinions that the decision arrived at, despite the reflection it might be held to cast on the Belgian army, was the right and prudent one, and if it had only been adhered to, many troubles, and some disgrace even, would have been avoided. Unfortunately, the Ministers in Brussels were inspired by an ignorant overconfidence, and when King Leopold reached the capital on the day following the despatch of the expresses from Liège, he encountered the opposition of his Government to what had been done. A lapse of memory on the part of M. Lebeau also put King Leopold at a disadvantage. Article 121 of the Constitution forbids the entry of a foreign army into the country without the prior consent of the Chambers, and the King in his own name had invited King Louis Philippe to send his troops without delay. Under these circumstances a compromise was arrived at, and new instructions were

sent to the Belgian Minister in Paris. The French Government was invited to hold its troops in readiness to advance on a further appeal reaching it from Brussels, and in the meanwhile King Leopold was to take the field and do what he could with the available Belgian forces to keep the Dutch invaders, when they arrived, in check.

There was no reluctance on the part of the French Government to come to the assistance of the Belgians. On receipt of King Leopold's letter, orders were sent at once to Marshal Gerard, who was in command of a considerable army that had been for some time past assembled at Maubeuge, to advance into Belgium, and the fresh decision of the Belgian Ministry to dispense with the French aid, if possible, only arrived just in time to arrest the forward movement. The motives of the Belgian Ministry in taking this step in opposition to the wise action of King Leopold were mixed. It was not merely that they thought it would be more glorious to defeat the enemy unaided, but French protection was at the moment somewhat dreaded, for in the French Premier's speech to the Chamber at Paris it had been announced that Belgium, through gratitude to France, intended to dismantle the frontier fortresses which had been erected after Waterloo as a barrier against France. As Belgium had no such intention, it looked like an attempt to force her hand. In the same speech also there was a passage to the effect that King Leopold would have no relations with the Germanic Confederation on account of Luxembourg, which meant, if anything, that Belgium was not to get the Grand Duchy. The summons to the French to send him an army without delay was sent, then, by King Leopold at a bad moment, but, none the less, it was a wise and necessary step to take in all the circumstances of the case.

We must now turn for a moment to Holland to describe briefly what had happened there in the few weeks since the Protocol of the Eighteen Articles was sent to The Hague to serve as "the preliminaries" to a treaty.

The Eighteen Articles were a concession to the Belgians. They were really the work of Lord Palmerston, who wished the candidature of Prince Leopold to prove successful; but the

reader will have no sort of doubt that, so far as the London Conference was concerned, they represented its own stultification. Belgium had been ordered by the five Powers to accept the Protocols of January ; she had been threatened with military pressure by German troops if she refused, and neither exhortation nor menace had made her yield one jot. The London Conference then ate its own words and pocketed its direst threats. It offered Belgium the Eighteen Articles, which certainly held out the hope that all she wanted would be given to or could be gained by her.

But what suited the Belgians did not suit the Dutch. What was honey in Brussels was gall and wormwood at The Hague. The Dutch Government called upon the London Conference to be firm and consistent. It said in brief : " Holland accepted your decisions in the January Protocols, which were the acme of wisdom, and Belgium refused. Now you tell us that Belgium has accepted some new and very different arrangement, but you must not be surprised at our telling you that it is our turn to say ' No.' We stand by the Protocols of January." In this contention there was all the material for a pretty discussion, but Holland had other views than mere talk. The European situation had turned rather in her favour. Russia was crushing the Poles, the Liberal wave throughout the Continent was ebbing, and, rightly or wrongly, King William and his advisers held that England and France could never act long together. But the strongest argument of all from the Dutch point of view was that an appeal to arms would be certain to improve their position and to insure better terms at least than those offered in the Eighteen Articles. If these views were held by the Dutch generally they were held still more strongly by the Prince of Orange, who was most anxious to retrieve his past failures in peace and war by some brilliant feat of arms.

During the eight months that the armistice had now lasted Holland had not been inactive. The Government had carried out a thorough reorganisation of its military forces. The King had made a strong personal appeal to his people to support him, and they had responded with enthusiasm. The army was raised to an effective war strength of 100,000 men, and

included a contingent of Swiss and German veterans. The cavalry and artillery were reorganised and equipped afresh. A plan of campaign was carefully worked out, and all the arrangements were made to put it in execution without delay when the moment arrived. The army which was to begin the campaign numbered 45,000 men and 72 guns, but the total force mobilised was, at a low computation, 80,000 men. There were three infantry divisions, one reserve division, and a cavalry division. The command-in-chief was given to the Prince of Orange, and the four divisional commanders were Duke Bernard of Saxe-Weimar, General Meyer, General Kurt Heyligers, and General Van Geen. The cavalry was commanded by General Tripp. Holland had never placed a better army in the field than the one she had ready to cross the Belgian frontier when on 1st August she repudiated the armistice.

In striking contrast with the deliberate preparations of the Dutch were the apathy, overconfidence, and unpreparedness of the Belgians. They underestimated their opponents, they overestimated their own prowess, and finally they displayed the characteristic contempt of the civilian who dons a uniform and shoulders a rifle for the regular professional soldier. A phrase shows the sentiment of the hour. The Belgian enthusiasts declared that only a stick and a kick (*un baton et un sabot*) were needed to drive the Dutch out of Maestricht, Luxembourg, and Antwerp. Confidence in one's superiority is often the presage of victory, but when it is coupled with ignorance of the essential elements of a struggle, it is the certain precursor of defeat. The Belgians had been led by the result of the street fighting in the cities, by the collapse of the Dutch resistance generally in the autumn of 1830, to think themselves invincible, and only a very small minority saw the truth clearly. M. Lebeau, in his conversation with the King at Liége, summed up the facts very well. In the strict sense of the word Belgium was without an army. The bonds of discipline were unloosed; the regular soldiers were few in number and imperfectly organised, the Civic Guard had no experience of field manœuvres, the cavalry hardly existed, and the artillery was of purely nominal strength. Even in numbers the Belgian army was only half

the strength of its opponent. To ask such a force to oppose the Prince of Orange's well-trained army in the field was to invite its self-destruction. Yet it was to lead it on this mad enterprise that the ignorant Cabinet in Brussels called upon King Leopold to stake his reputation as a man and a soldier, and his fortunes as a King.

King Leopold did not hesitate. He at once left to join the army at Antwerp, issuing the following spirited address to the nation at the moment of his departure :

BELGIANS,

On taking possession of the throne to which the national will called me I said to the representatives of Belgium : " If in spite of every sacrifice to preserve peace we were threatened with war, I would not hesitate to appeal to the courage of the Belgian people, and I hoped that it would rally all together round its Head for the defence of the country and the national independence."

These words I address to-day to the whole nation.

Without prior warning the enemy have suddenly resumed hostilities, ignoring at the same time the obligations resulting from the suspension of arms, and the principles which guide civilised peoples.

They have not recoiled before the most odious violation of the law of nations, and by surprise they have sought to obtain some momentary advantages. They are the same men you saw last September ; they have appeared in the midst of a peaceable population preceded by fire and devastation.

Strong in the sentiment of our right, we will repulse this unjust aggression ; we will oppose force by force.

Already you have once beaten the Dutch ; you began the Revolution with victory, you will consolidate it in victory. You will not be unfaithful to your glorious memories ; your enemies await you in the region which has already witnessed their defeat.

Each of us will do his duty.

Belgian, like you, I will defend Belgium.

I rely on the Civic Guard, on the army, on the courage and devotion of you all.

I go to my post. I expect there all Belgians to whom the country, honour, and liberty are dear.

LEOPOLD.

BRUSSELS, *4th August, 1831.*

The Dutch had resumed hostilities earlier than the Belgians had supposed to be their intention. General Chassé's four days' notice applied only to Antwerp. King William's Proclamation to the Belgian people announcing that the Belgians who offered no opposition would be better treated than those who opposed his troops, and the Prince of Orange's army, crossed the frontier together at daybreak on 2nd August. While the Plenipotentiaries in London were splitting hairs as to the meaning of King William's notification that he was going to

have recourse to "military measures," which, with ill-timed innocence, the representatives of the Powers affected to believe would be taken only *within* his frontier, the Dutch were executing their plans to achieve a prompt and complete success. Their plans were good in themselves, and they had prepared the way by an extensive suborning of Belgians in responsible positions, who were bribed to betray their trust, to embarrass those who attempted to do their duty, and to bring about the general collapse of their country's defence. The full extent of the Orangist movement in Belgium during the summer of 1831 will never be known, but evidence that this endeavour to sap the Belgians' position by wholesale bribery was not an invention was furnished when the accounts submitted to The Hague Parliament for the expenses of the war revealed a secret service fund of over two millions sterling, or as much as the cost of the campaign. But for complete success one other thing was necessary besides the prepared force and the sapped Belgian position, and that was celerity in movement. Fortunately for Belgium and King Leopold, the Prince of Orange was slow and deliberate, and therefore failed to achieve the great triumph that was well within his grasp.

The most advanced position of the Belgians on the northern frontier was at Turnhout, where the valourous and energetic Niellon was in command of a brigade. On 1st August this brigade had been weakened by the absence of two battalions, which had been sent to Antwerp for the King's review. Niellon, the ex-French non-commissioned officer, had shown throughout the whole of the Belgian struggle the *feu sacré* of the born soldier, and had won by sheer merit the grade of Brigadier-General. From Turnhout he had been a careful observer of all the military preparations going on in North Brabant, and his intelligence service was well organised. His reports to headquarters gave complete and accurate information as to the strength and position of the several Dutch corps long before any forward movement had begun. On 1st August news reached him that during the coming night the Dutch would advance to attack him at daybreak.

Niellon's brigade formed part of the army of the Scheldt

commanded by Baron Tieken, another ex-Imperial soldier, but of higher grade than his Brigadier, who had distinguished himself on many occasions in command of the Red Lancers of the Guard. Tieken had never established or advanced any pretensions to military skill beyond those of being a dashing leader of cavalry, and now he was growing old. As soon as Niellon saw, by the movements of troops he detected on the other side of the frontier from his point of observation in the church-tower of Turnhout, that his information was correct, he sent off an express to warn Tieken, to ask for reinforcements, and to notify his intention to keep the enemy in check as long as he possibly could. Tieken received Niellon's despatch soon after the receipt of Chassé's notice to resume hostilities on the 4th, and he very weakly believed that Niellon was mistaken, and that no hostilities would occur before the night of the 4th or the morning of the 5th. He thereupon sent Niellon instructions to retire without fighting, to evacuate Turnhout on the enemy's approach, and to bring his force to Schilde, the rallying-point fixed for the army of the Scheldt, which lies some ten miles east of Antwerp. The chief vice in the Belgian position was the long interval that separated the army of the Scheldt from that of the Meuse. Had Niellon obeyed Tieken's instructions, the junction of the two armies would have become impossible. As long as he held on to Turnhout, that junction remained perfectly feasible, and, indeed, easy, by a rapid march of Daine's army westwards from Hasselt to Diest.

For these reasons Niellon held to his own resolution, and ignored his chief's orders. Besides, he had committed himself to the defence of his position before they reached him, and he was always hoping that Tieken would play the worthier part, and hasten with at least the bulk of his troops to his assistance ; but Tieken had to report to the War Minister at Brussels, and thus during the critical days of 2nd and 3rd August Niellon was left to act on his own judgment and with his very limited resources. At daybreak on the 2nd, when the Dutch broke over the frontier, they were met by the fire of a concealed force well posted and supported by artillery. They

did not know its strength, and they were unprepared for any opposition. Niellon had posted his men well, with one flank protected by a marsh, and during the whole of the 2nd he kept 12,000 Dutch troops in check with his handful of 800 men. In the evening one of his absent battalions returned, and he thus had 1,800 men with which to resume the defence on the morrow. For the second day's fight he retired slightly to the south-east, making the village of Raevens the centre of his position. He did everything in his power to mask his position, and to convey the idea that he was in far greater strength than he was in reality.

The Prince of Orange paid him the compliment of bringing an overwhelming force against him. Three divisions and a large cavalry force were so disposed as to attack him on all sides, and if possible cut off his retreat. But Niellon held his ground until late in the afternoon on the 3rd, repulsing several cavalry attacks, and animating his men with the hope, which he never abandoned himself, that reinforcements would arrive in time from Antwerp. But although he beat off every attack, he could not ignore the fact that the Dutch were getting round both his flanks, and that, to save his force, he must retreat. His withdrawal was conducted with consummate ability, and he carried off with him all the stores in the magazines of Turnhout. He retired to Zandhoven, where he could still extend a helping hand to General Daine if he had marched to Diest. The Prince of Orange passed the night of 3rd and 4th August in the house at Turnhout where General Niellon had resided for some months, and then learnt, to his disgust, that his fine army of 25,000 men had been held in check for two whole days by a body of troops which never exceeded 1,800 strong.

The centre of interest now moves farther east to the army of the Meuse quartered round Hasselt. Niellon's obstinate defence at Turnhout had secured a respite of two days. The Prince of Orange only reached Diest on 5th August, whereas he had counted on being there on the 3rd, and he was compelled to suspend all operations on the 6th in order to allow his troops to get to their assigned positions. If Daine had

rapidly concentrated his force on the 4th and marched from Hasselt, he could easily have anticipated the Prince of Orange at Diest, and brought about the junction of all the Belgian forces for the defence of Louvain and the capital. The motives of his conduct are obscure, but his acts speak for themselves. He was not so well informed about Dutch movements as Niellon, but on 3rd and 4th August he had a rude warning as to what was coming.

His force was very scattered, and one battalion of the 11th Regiment held Oostham and the other Beeringen. During the night of 3rd August, Meyer surprised the former, and in the course of the next day dispersed the latter. Daine could no longer be in doubt that the enemy was marching to attack him. In the early morning of the 5th he received a despatch from the acting War Minister, General d'Hane, to move west to join Tieken. He thereupon called in his scattered detachments, leaving, however, 3,500 men to keep up the investment of Maestricht; and on 6th August he had 10,000 troops collected on the heights of Zonhoven, a little north-east of Hasselt. His left wing occupied the village of Houthaelen, situated on the chaussée. His position was distinctly strong; he had the choice of several lines of retreat, all of them absolutely secure, and there was still time to have made a move on Diest if the commander had displayed the most ordinary activity.

Daine was in a state of doubt as to what he should do when General du Failly arrived in his camp, and at once confusion became worse confounded. No explanation of what follows is possible except the assumption that Du Failly was a traitor to his country, and that he had engaged to sell one of her armies to the invader. Du Failly was still, as far as Daine knew, titularly War Minister, and Daine, showing him the order he had received to join Tieken, asked for his instructions. We will assume that Daine was ignorant of the fact that Du Failly had first gone to Antwerp, where Tieken, well informed of his purpose, had ordered him to quit his camp. Du Failly, instead of replying to the question, took out of his pocket King William's Proclamation to the Belgians, read it

in a loud voice to Daine and his staff, laying emphasis on the passage promising lenient terms to those who did not oppose the Dutch troops, and concluded with the extraordinary declaration that, in his opinion, "*resistance was impossible.*" Some of the officers present protested, but Daine, whether he was less deeply implicated in the new Orange plot or not,* was reduced to a state of mental collapse, of which he furnished convincing proof during the events of the next two days.

Indeed, evidence of this was furnished within a few hours. The Belgian position, extending from Zonhoven over the elevated moor of Winterslag to Hengelhof, was strong, and commanded the whole country in front of it. The village of Houthaelen, slightly in advance of Zonhoven, formed the left point. It was held by a small body of regulars and the Meuse Rifle Battalion, some 700 strong, commanded by Major Lecharlier. The latter corps had fought a running fight during the 5th as it retired from Hechtel before the advancing division of Kurt Heyligers. Although his men were fatigued and hungry, and had little ammunition left, Lecharlier joined in the defence of Houthaelen, which was attacked and occupied early on the 6th by Kurt Heyligers.

This General had less than 7,000 men under his command, and they were not all regular troops, being composed largely of communal guards. When he attacked Houthaelen the small force in that place retired on Zonhoven, and resisted cheerfully in the full belief that Daine's 10,000 men would sweep down from the heights of Winterslag and annihilate the Dutch corps of little over half its strength. This was the only occasion during the campaign that the Belgians were in greater numbers than the Dutch, and they could easily have struck a blow then that would have gone far towards qualifying, if not neutralising, the success which the invaders achieved. But Daine did nothing. He remained for hours an idle spectator of the attempt made by 7,000 Dutch troops to drive 1,200

* It is probable that Daine, who had been implicated in the Van der Smissen plot of 1831, was not acquainted with all the latest moves in the game, and that Du Faily's proposals took him by surprise. In his defence he declared long afterwards that, after Du Faily spoke, he turned to his aide-de-camp and said: "General Du Faily is a traitor; I will order his arrest." Unfortunately this remark was only in the nature of an aside.

Belgians and two guns out of Zonhoven village. At last, when his officers became so furious that they threatened to act by themselves, he allowed half a battalion and half a battery to move forward and attack the flank of the Dutch force, which at once beat a retreat, and were in turn driven out of the village of Houthaelen, which they had captured in the morning. The Belgian army was seriously discouraged by these proceedings, and lost all faith in its commander. On the following day General Daine abandoned Zonhoven, and retired to Hasselt. He then moved part of his force down the Demer Valley, as if he intended to execute the movement on Diest, which he had been ordered to undertake two days before. But it was now too late. The Prince of Orange was in firm possession of Diest, and General Meyer's corps of 15,000 men was moving up the Demer to join Kurt Heyligers.

There was one encounter between a portion of Daine's force and General Meyer's which shed some lustre on Belgian arms. At Kermpst a brigade of Daine's army, 2,000 strong, clearing the road, as it thought, for the march to Diest, came into contact with Meyer's corps, and drove the Dutch in confusion before them for some distance,* but, instead of following up this success, Daine called in the detachment, and made up his mind to retreat to Liège the next day.

By this occurrence, following immediately on the affair at Zonhoven, the confidence of the Belgian troops forming the army of the Meuse in themselves and their chiefs had been completely shaken. Accusations of treachery were heard on every side, and it was positively declared that Du Failly, if not Daine as well, had a conversation at the advanced posts with some of the Dutch commanders during the night of 7th and 8th August. As a choice of evils, the subordinate officers then clamoured to return to Liège.

* Colonel Huybrecht, describing this brilliant affair, when 2,000 Belgians expelled 15,000 Dutch troops, with many guns, from a strong position, says : " From one o'clock in the afternoon, when the affair commenced, to six in the evening, when it closed, neither Daine nor Du Failly appeared on the scene. They remained in Hasselt. Thanks to the devoted courage of Colonel Bouchez, Majors Petithan, Patoux, and Vanderveken, Captain Ary, and the artillery officers, Lieutenants Fonsny and Lahure, and their men, Belgium found on that day some consolation in the bravery of her sons for the weakness of those to whom she had confided the care of her honour " (p. 184 *op. cit.*).

Having decided on adopting this course, the quicker Daine made his retreat the better ; but instead of starting at four o'clock in the morning, when everything was ready, he deferred it till eight o'clock, by which time the Dutch troops were close at hand. Lecharlier, on the withdrawal from the Demer, had been left in a position outside the Curange gate of Hasselt to keep the Prince of Orange in check, which he did during the earlier hours of the summer morning of 8th August. Thanks to this resistance, Daine got his troops safely through and out of Hasselt, but all the rules that apply to the retirement of a force were broken. Cavalry and infantry were mixed up together ; the guns, in the middle of other troops, were allowed no space to deploy, and the highroad was blocked with waggons and tumbrils.

No intimation, also, that the troops had evacuated Hasselt was sent to Lecharlier, and it was almost by a miracle that he succeeded in getting away. When he reached the rearguard, he protested against the disorder and confusion, and warned the officer to whom Daine, who led the advanced guard with Du Failly, not caring what happened behind them, had entrusted the command of the rear, that the Dutch were close at hand. In the midst of their discussion the Dutch cavalry and some horse artillery emerged from the south gate of Hasselt and began the attack. A scene of much confusion followed ; many of the men fled, some waggons were abandoned, and for a moment it looked as if a general *sauve qui peut* would ensue.

In such extremities brave men find their opportunities. Out of the ruck of cowed and confused humanity on the chaussée of Tongres that morning two men emerged to save their fellows and the credit of their army. Lieutenant-Colonel de Lobel, who bore on his face the ineffaceable mark of the sabre-cut he had received at Waterloo in one of the charges made by Tripp's cuirassiers, extricated two squadrons of his little cavalry force from the crowd, and drew them up facing the enemy in a field at the side of the road. Major Kessels, on the opposite side of the chaussée, got four guns to bear on the Dutch, whose ardour was soon checked by their volleys. Major Lecharlier's devoted rifles provided the infantry. A

small protecting rearguard was thus improvised, and the Dutch never got through it. Thanks to its bold attitude and skilful retirement by sections, the Dutch never pressed too close, and Daine was able to halt for four hours at Cortessem, and to restore some order in his whole force. This fact alone disposes of the absurdly exaggerated account given at the time by Orange sympathisers in England to the effect that the Belgian army of the Meuse fled in hopeless disorder back to Liége.

The Dutch discontinued their attacks on the rearguard when their own losses became considerable. The Prince of Orange soon countermanded the pursuit. Why? News had reached him that the energetic Niellon was threatening his base in Diest. He had also learned that an attempt made from Maestricht to seize Tongres, and thus cut off Daine from Liége, had failed. His hope to conclude this side of the campaign by the capture of the army of the Meuse with the criminal co-operation of its own commander was not realised; he had to be content with the minor satisfaction of knowing that one part of the small Belgian army had ceased to be of any practical value for the time being in opposing his other operations.

The manner in which the Dutch had attempted to seize Tongres is interesting, because it provides further proof of the ramifications of the Dutch plot to disarm Belgium by corrupting her military chiefs. The command at Tongres was in the hands of Colonel Wusten, who was in correspondence with the Dutch authorities at Maestricht. He promised them to evacuate Tongres and retreat to Liége. Taking Du Failly's line, that resistance would be hopeless, he succeeded in inducing his chief officers to agree with him that the wisest course was to retire. One brave man defeated this craven and culpable betrayal of a national trust. Major Aulard, of the 1st Battalion of the 1st Chasseurs, refused to obey him, and, his men supporting him, Wusten was compelled to defer his departure.

In the meantime the Dutch General Boccop, believing that he would find Tongres unoccupied, left Maestricht with 1,600 men, counting on an easy success and to win a great reputation by cutting off the retreat of the army of the Meuse. To

his surprise, when he arrived close to Tongres at daybreak of 7th August, he found the Belgian troops ready to receive him, and his force attacking, it was repulsed with some loss. General Boccop hurried back to Maestricht as rapidly as he could, but Wusten succeeded in inducing his officers and their men, despite this success and Major Aulard's continued opposition, to adopt his proposal of retreating to Liége, and on 8th August the withdrawal was carried into effect. Aulard, finding that only 300 men would remain with him, was compelled to follow in the rear. On reaching Liége, General Van der Meere, in command of the place, at once ordered Wusten to retrace his steps. Half-way back he met Daine's force in retreat, and all the troops returned together to Liége, entering the city at two o'clock in the morning of 9th August.

Although the subsequent inquiry acquitted Daine, there is no doubt that he was a traitor, in intention, if not in deed. In 1841 he was implicated in Van der Smissen's second plot, but he again escaped with the comparatively mild punishment of removal from his command. In 1831 both he and Du Failly ought to have been shot. The non-commissioned officer who rushed into their presence while breakfasting at Cortessem and apostrophised them, with a pistol at their heads, as follows : "Never did a General lead troops as you have done. Your conduct has been base. You are traitors, on whom I will exercise summary justice !" had a sounder judgment of their demerit than their too indulgent superiors, and it was a pity that he was prevented from carrying out his intention.

With regard to the contempt poured on the Belgians for what was called their disgraceful rout at Hasselt in English papers and periodicals,* the facts given supply the corrective

* A typical instance is furnished in the *Annual Register* for 1831. All Englishmen were not so unappreciative at the time. The author of *A Letter on the Belgic Revolution* (London, 1831) compared the Belgians with the Dutch most favourably :

"In 1815, when Bonaparte, like one of Homer's gods, had bounded at once over the sphere that separated him from Paris, and rushed upon Belgium with his veteran battalions, you should have seen, my friend, with what ardour the Belgic soldiers, forgetful of the past and fighting for their country, resisted the shock of the French army, whilst the Dutch regiments fled from the field like cowards. At the battle of Waterloo they fought with a valour which the world has delighted to honour." The reader need not believe the slander on the Dutch at Waterloo.

and answer. There was no rout, and the only disgrace fell on Daine, Du Failly, and Wusten. The strongest proof that the Belgians of the army of the Meuse, however discouraged and disgusted they may have been, were not demoralised is furnished by the following simple fact: Colonel Charles de Brouckère, sent by the King to Liège, took over the command of the army of the Meuse on 9th August. In three days he formed out of it a new army of 12,000 men and five batteries, and he marched out with this force to rejoin the King. He entered Tirlemont on the 13th at the head of this force, composed mainly of the very same men who were led so badly by Daine and his associates. On reaching Tirlemont, he learnt that the campaign had terminated in the manner now to be described.

It is time now to return to King Leopold. On 5th August he established his headquarters at Malines. He was accompanied by General Goblet, whom he made chief of his staff, and General d'Hane, the War Minister. Niellon, as already described, had retired before the Prince of Orange, having delayed him for two days and divined his plan of campaign, which was based on the early capture of Diest. General d'Hane, on the other hand, was fully convinced, honestly or the reverse, that the Dutch goal was Antwerp, and Tieken was peremptorily ordered to remain on the defensive, and on no account to send troops to Niellon. The order of the day was to take no offensive measures, but Tieken, as loyal an officer as the other commander in the eastern sphere was disloyal, asked satirically, was he not to fight if attacked?

King Leopold was at this moment in a strange country and among strangers. He was watching and judging, but he could not condemn nor censure. He had seen at a glance the defect in the strategical position, and he had sought to remedy it by ordering Daine to move westwards. He also saw that Tieken, on his side, must move a little eastwards, and at this moment Niellon's advice, given in the form of a plan of action, was received to the effect that the army of the Scheldt should advance on Westerloo, whence Diest might be easily attacked. As D'Hane, in face of the Prince of Orange's pre-

sence at Diest, could no longer pretend that Antwerp was his objective, Tieken got orders to march to Westerloo, and Niellon's corps led the way. Niellon had proposed that the army should march by the southern bank of the Nèthe, which protected its flank, breaking the bridges as it advanced ; and this plan also was adopted. In the evening of 7th August the army reached Westerloo, and early in the morning of the 8th Niellon's corps was within five miles of Diest. News had then been received of the success at Kermpt. The Belgians were elated. A great success at Diest, where many of the invaders' stores had been collected, seemed assured.

This reasonable hope was destined to be disappointed. During the morning of the 8th, King Leopold, dissatisfied with the contentions among his staff, assumed the command-in-chief in person, and issued an order that the whole of the army of the Scheldt should concentrate at Aerschot. This movement entailed the withdrawal of Niellon's advanced corps and the transfer of Tieken's force from the Nèthe to the Demer. In the afternoon of the 8th the King had nearly 15,000 men at Aerschot under his direct command. The troops, " although tired to death, received His Majesty with cheers and extreme joy." The King, believing in the reported successes of Daine, decided to march the next morning on Montaignu, a small town famous for a shrine of much sanctity, and thence to attack Diest. The movement for this purpose had begun when, at eleven o'clock in the morning of the 9th, certain intelligence arrived that General Daine was retreating to Liège, and that his army could no longer be counted on. The situation with which King Leopold was then confronted was as follows : He had 15,000 men with which to oppose an army that was certainly 50,000 strong, and might be stronger ; and for the moment there was no other available force in Belgium to help him to protect the capital.

In this crisis King Leopold took the right step. He reverted to his decision at Liège on the 2nd of the month, and he sent off an express to Marshal Gérard, requesting him to come to his aid, and thus save Brussels from the invader. At the same time he sent Colonel Charles de Brouckère on his

mission to Liège to reform the army of the Meuse, whilst he retired to Louvain, in front of which city he took up his position. General Tieken very wisely occupied the woods of Heverlé, the estate of the Duke d'Arenberg, south of Louvain, on the road to Brussels, thus making sure of a line of retreat ; but General Goblet very foolishly removed the troops from their posts there, with results which nearly proved fatal to the whole force.

During 10th and 11th August all the Dutch corps were marching towards Louvain. On the 11th the King, having reviewed his troops, decided to make a forward movement in the direction of Tirlemont. He soon came into contact with the Dutch forces, stiff fights taking place at Lovingoul, where the 12th Belgian Regiment lost 250 out of 1,200 men, and at Boutersem, where the King led a reconnaissance right into the Dutch position. It was on this occasion that his officers begged him not to expose himself so freely, to which he only replied : " I must show an example to these young soldiers." General Van Gagern, a Dutch officer present on the occasion, wrote in his Memoirs : " The King of the Belgians gave repeated proofs of his intrepidity and presence of mind. In a reconnaissance pushed forward to our lines he exposed himself to the utmost danger, and had not our cavalry been so fatigued, would have fallen into our hands."

At Boutersem, Sir Robert Adair, the British Minister, arrived with the intelligence that he had just come from The Hague, where King William had given him a personal assurance that orders had been sent to the Prince of Orange to suspend operations, and to return to Holland with his army. Believing this statement, King Leopold began his retreat to Louvain. As the Dutch troops continued to attack, it was well for the Belgians that Niellon's corps had seized a strong position on the plateau of Pellenberg, from which it covered the retirement of the rest of the army. So close did the Dutch press that Niellon had to make one charge at the head of his own chasseurs to keep them at bay. As the Belgians had, in consequence of Sir Robert Adair's representations, refrained from the offensive, and were to some extent surprised by the persistence of the

Dutch attack, the British Minister sent his Secretary, Lord William Russell, to apprise the Prince of Orange of what he had done, and to call upon him to obey his father's orders. He was also instructed to inform the Prince that the French army had crossed the frontier, and was marching on Brussels. The Prince of Orange displayed some scepticism as to the accuracy of what he was told, and replied briefly that he was resolved to capture Louvain.

When Sir Robert Adair received this reply, he proceeded himself to the Prince of Orange's headquarters, riding at great personal risk through the sharpshooters of the two armies. He saw the Prince, and succeeded in convincing him that the French army was really approaching, and that King William had given orders to stop hostilities. The Prince then promised to suspend operations, and the division under his immediate command halted. The Belgian army had meanwhile been drawn up at Corbeek-Loo, a village east of Louvain, in readiness for whatever might happen ; but when Sir Robert Adair brought back the Prince's positive assurance that hostilities were suspended, King Leopold marched his troops into Louvain itself, and drew them up on the boulevards of that ancient city.

While the Prince of Orange to a certain extent did himself what he promised, he made no effort to restrain his divisional commanders, who resumed the attempt to capture Louvain by force of arms. As it was stipulated by the arrangement for the suspension of hostilities that Louvain should capitulate the next day, their attacks were only actuated by the wish to humiliate the Belgians, and perhaps to capture King Leopold. However, the Belgians, under Niellon, whom the King had appointed commandant of Louvain, offered a very effective defence, and when the Dutch made an imposing attempt to capture one of the gates, they were received, to their great surprise, by a volley from sixty large fortress cannon placed on the ramparts. After this the Dutch desisted from any further attempt to capture Louvain ; but a new peril revealed itself.

Duke Bernard of Saxe-Weimar had got round the city and seized the Heverlé position, which commanded the routes

to Brussels on one side and Malines on the other. When he was informed of the suspension of arms, the Duke replied that he knew nothing of it, and that he would not allow the Belgian troops to pass. As the object of this plan was perfectly clear, and could be nothing else than to involve King Leopold and the whole Belgian force in the capitulation of the city fixed for the next day, the King came to a prompt decision to baffle it. Placing himself at the head of his cavalry, under the command of Colonel Marneffe, King Leopold rode straight down the Brussels chaussée towards Heverlé, and then, taking a sharp turn to the right, he gained the Malines road under the fire of the Duke's riflemen. Fortunately the road ran through a cutting; their aim was too high, and little loss was experienced. General Tieken wished no more than his Sovereign to pass under the Caudine Forks, and, drawing up his infantry, he led it out of the city with music playing and standards unrolled, past the force at Heverlé. On this occasion Duke Bernard did not fire at all. The reunited army of the Scheldt assembled the same evening at Campenhout.

There remained, then, in Louvain, Niellon,* with 300 infantry and a squadron of cavalry. He employed the interval still remaining before the formal surrender in saving the siege-guns and the stores. He sent as many of the guns and as much of the munitions as he could away on barges, and those he could not save he sank in the canal. At twelve o'clock on 13th August he gave up the place, marching out with all the honours of war to rejoin his Sovereign and chief. By this time the French had arrived. Their advanced guard had passed through Brussels on the 12th, and as Niellon marched westwards, the heads of the French columns came in sight of Heverlé. A convention was speedily concluded for the retirement of the Dutch army, which began at once. On 14th August Louvain was evacuated, and by the 20th not a Dutch soldier remained on Belgian soil except in the places and positions held prior to 1st August.

In concluding this brief account of the ten days' campaign between Belgium and Holland in August, 1831, three com-

* Niellon's Memoirs are full of interesting details.

petent opinions—two of them from prominent actors in the scenes we have described—may be given. However unfortunate the results of this little war were to Belgium herself, and however disastrous its incidents proved to the reputation of some of her Generals, there was one reputation that rose immensely in the public estimation. King Leopold had proved his worth,* and the sympathy and admiration of his subjects were all the greater because he had been the victim, as it were, of the corrupt and improvident War Ministers who, with a grant of nearly three millions sterling (72 million francs), had given the country only 25,000 troops.†

The first opinion to be quoted, then, is that of King Leopold himself. In his speech at the opening of the Chambers on 8th September, 1831, he said :

“Belgium, confiding to excess in the engagements contracted by Holland towards the five Powers, and to which it had itself subscribed, was suddenly surprised by an army the force of which far exceeded that which Belgium could oppose to it. In these painful circumstances the succour of friendly Powers became urgent and indispensable. You know with what generous promptness it was afforded us. If individual courage, if the bravery which has never been denied the Belgic soldier, could have made up for the want of organisation and union which was felt in our young army, without doubt (and you will believe my testimony) we should have victoriously repulsed an unexpected aggression contrary to all the principles of the law of nations. The nation will be but the more sensible of the absolute necessity of the reforms already commenced, and which are prosecuted with a degree of activity the result of which will soon be apparent. In a few days Belgium will have an army which, if it should be again neces-

* Stockmar, in his Memoirs, tells a story of how someone found King Leopold resting after the fight at Boutersem on a truss of straw, and whistling an English tune. Lord William Russell, on arriving in London fresh from the scene of war, said to Stockmar : “ I admire the King. I never gave him credit for what there is really in him. It seems it wants external causes to move his faculties into action. The whole government rests on him. He is popular with everybody.”

† The new Minister, Charles de Brouckère, provided within six months of the capitulation of Louvain 85,000 men on a grant of only half a million sterling (12,000,000 francs). The contrast tells its own story.

sary, would be able to rally round its King, to defend with honour and with success the independence and the rights of the country."

The second opinion is that of the brave General Niellon, of whom it may be said without exaggeration that he proved himself the only "fighting" General in the campaign. His opinion will be found in his *Memoirs (Evènements des années, 1830-3, p. 273)* :

"Brave Belgian soldiers ! as I am a foreigner, I may be permitted to proclaim the truth and render you justice. No ! You were not conquered ! Everywhere that you were allowed to come into contact with the enemy you repulsed him, despite the great disproportion of your forces, and when the French Generals were told of what you had done, they regarded it at first as pure invention. It was only on reaching the spot that they were able to see the exact truth, and then to express their admiration of what you had accomplished. The most solidly formed army in both the physical and the moral sense could not have fought more heroically than you did in the midst of the inextricable network of ambuscades in which you were snared. Betrayed by those who, by virtue of their high offices, could alone unmask traitors, you were bound to succumb ; but I repeat you were not conquered. Far from this series of treasons having injured your reputation for bravery won on so many battle-fields, it showed your enemies, on the contrary, of what you would be capable if you were called upon to fight under chiefs worthy to command you."

The third opinion is that of the expert student, weighing all the evidence and striving to get at the truth by the light of the proved facts. Such a student certainly was Colonel P. A. Huybrecht,* whose conclusion, calmly developed, and stated without prejudice or passion, we adopt as our own :

"We have shown irrefutably that the campaign of August, 1831, in no way reflected on the honour of Belgian arms. Far from that, in all the encounters the Belgians, in spite of their

* *Histoire politique et militaire de la Belgique en 1830-31* (Bruxelles, 1856).

great numerical inferiority, worthily upheld the reputation for bravery handed down to them by their ancestors. We conclude, from the political and military facts which marked the revolutionary period, that the campaign of August, 1831, was only the execution of the plot of March transferred to the battle-field with the tacit consent of the London Conference."

CHAPTER IX.

The Twenty-four Articles.

THE significance of a campaign is not to be measured by the calm examination of its incidents after the lapse of time, but by the impression it creates at the moment. The events of August, 1831, proved disastrous for Belgian pretensions, and history contains hardly a more striking case of the penalty a nation has to pay for leaving its defences in an imperfect condition and its army unprepared to resist invasion. Up to that period the Belgians had done exceedingly well, and had created a reputation which made even their detractors hesitate to challenge their capacity to make good all their pretensions in a single-handed trial of strength with Holland. The Eighteen Articles were drawn up under those influences. They were a tribute to Belgian courage and confidence. But for their acceptance and ratification there needed something more than the formal exchange of the ratified copies among the Powers. It was essential that Belgium's reputation should remain undiminished, and that, if assailed, she should give a good account of herself in the field. Partly through improvidence, partly through the treachery, not of the mass of her citizens, but of some of those in authority, Belgium failed to pass through the ordeal. Her sword broke in her hand. She had to suffer like all the defeated. "The Eighteen Articles," in M. Nothomb's words, were "killed at Louvain."

King Leopold had accepted the throne of Belgium on the faith of the Eighteen Articles, and on the pledge of the Powers that, if the King of Holland would not accept them, means would be found to make him. But the people who trust to others fulfilling their engagements instead of to their own right

arms for their security build upon sand, and criticism of the moral lapses of their patrons and protectors provides but a poor solace for lost territory and the severance of kindred races. The Powers made no attempt to keep faith. As it had done in the case of the January Protocols, the London Conference did with the Eighteen Articles. It ate its own words. The moral blame for what amounted to the abandonment of King Leopold fell chiefly upon England, and two distinct motives explain the change of policy which led to the withdrawal of her support of Belgian pretensions to possess the whole of the Belgic provinces. Those motives were, first, apprehension of French designs, and, secondly, revived sympathy with the House of Orange and the Dutch, who were proclaimed in the press and on the platform to be England's natural allies.

Conferences were invented for talk, not action, and the London Conference, during the nine years that it nominally existed, with a long interval of suspended animation between 1833 and 1838, might claim the record for the number of its Protocols. If there is one thing, however, that upsets the equanimity of these collective bodies more than another it is that one of their members should resort to action on its own account, without waiting for their ponderous and slow-moving sanction. It makes no difference that the step taken is obviously the only one that is feasible to enforce the conclusions of the conferring Powers themselves.

The prompt and vigorous action of France affronted the dignity and exposed the ineptitude of the Plenipotentiaries in London. Unfortunately it did more. It aroused misgivings and apprehensions in Downing Street, and they were much increased by the injudicious speech of the French Premier, already mentioned, alleging that Belgium had engaged to dismantle the fortresses on the French frontier. Those fortresses, it should be remembered, had been constructed by the Duke of Wellington, on the mandate of Europe, as a protection against France, whose aggressive disposition was then the bugbear of the nations. When the British Government heard, therefore, that the French army had entered Belgium, and swept across

the country in a style that showed the Dutch could not dream even of offering resistance, it hesitated, instead of at once seconding French action by sending its fleet to the Scheldt. It was oppressed by a sudden misgiving that the outcome of French action would be to attach Belgium as a dependency to France. Instead, then, of heartily and openly supporting the French Government, Lord Palmerston made representations at Paris to the effect that the French army should only remain the shortest possible time on Belgian soil, and that the retirement of the Dutch troops should be promptly followed by that of the French. At the same time the British fleet, instead of sailing for the Scheldt, remained anchored in the Downs.

Distrust of France was not the sole, or even the principal, motive of the change that took place in English policy in August, 1831. The Prince of Orange's campaign, skilfully magnified in Holland into a national triumph, produced scarcely less impression in England, where it was generally represented as destroying the pretensions of the Belgians to the possession of the faintest courage. The rout of Hasselt, as it was called, gave rise to the other fiction that the Belgians ran away at Waterloo. When popular prejudice is thus aroused, the capacity for exercising calm judgment and discrimination seems to disappear. Not a word is to be found in any English publication during August, 1831, in extenuation of Belgian reverses, or explaining that they were not so overwhelming as they were represented to be in Holland. It was a modern exemplification of the truth of the phrase *Væ victis* !*

But there was a more serious doubt at the root of British hesitation at this crisis. The question was asked in all seriousness whether the policy we had pursued in assisting the Belgians at all was not a mistaken one, and against our own interests. The Orange fervour rose to a high point, and for a brief space the reunion of the Netherlands Kingdom seemed the political

* King Leopold received many proofs of the ill effect of what he called "that unfortunate campaign of August, 1831." Austria, Prussia, and Russia refused to receive or recognise the Ministers he appointed to their respective Courts. This was a rude blow, but perhaps it had the effect of making England, who had received M. Van de Weyer in his official capacity, stand more firmly to the side of Belgium in the end.

ideal of the hour. This inclination soon passed off before the moderation of France, but it left behind it the determination that Holland should be required to make as little further sacrifices as possible. From that point of view the Prince of Orange's campaign had not been fought in vain. His own people gave him a great ovation and made him a popular hero. The British Government decided that the clauses of the Eighteen Articles favouring the extreme claims of the Belgians should not be upheld, and thus was brought about eventually the retention of Maestricht, including the Limburg districts on the right bank of the Meuse, and of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg by the ruling House of Holland.

The hesitation and holding back of England could not but react unfavourably on her influence and reputation among the Belgians. As the Belgian Foreign Minister wrote on 16th August to M. Van de Weyer in London: "The English Ministry, by their delays, hesitations, and misplaced fears, have lost for the present all moral influence in Belgium." On the other hand, French influence gained enormously by the frank and prompt action of King Louis Philippe's Government. The French army arrived at the moment of peril. It saved the cities from the presence of an enemy. The gratitude of the Belgian people could not have been anything less than warm and sincere under such circumstances, nor has the lapse of eighty years effaced the impression that it was France alone who saved Belgium from the horrors of an invasion.

The policy of the French Government proved so frank and loyal that the suspicions of England were gradually disarmed. The French army, having done its work, prepared to evacuate the country. The last Dutch soldier having left Belgium on 20th August, Marshal Gérard informed the Belgian Government the next day that he and his troops would return to France. At that moment King Leopold was devoting all his time and attention to the reorganisation of his own forces. During the period of reorganisation it was desirable to keep some good troops in Belgium, for it was felt that the Prince of Orange, thirsting for military fame, might seek some fresh

opportunity of molesting the Belgians, and therefore the Belgian Government requested the French to leave at least a part of their army in the country a little longer. Twenty thousand French troops returned at once, but the remainder did not quit Belgium till 17th September.

This was not the only service that the French rendered Belgium at this juncture. General Belliard, the French Ambassador in Brussels, took an active part in assisting King Leopold to create a new Belgian army, and the Duke of Wellington, whose Orange sympathies were certainly not diminished by the proposal to blow up his fortresses, styled him the Belgian Commander-in-Chief. King Leopold experienced a difficulty in obtaining a sufficient number of trained officers, free from all suspicion of Orange partisanship, and he asked for, and was granted, the services of a considerable number of French officers to train his new regiments. Generals Evian and Desprez, who had won their spurs in the Napoleonic wars, took in their hands the training of the Belgian army, which they soon raised to a far greater strength and efficiency than the Dutch. The cheap triumph of the Prince of Orange in 1831 could not have been repeated, and as the Powers came to know this fact they were most careful throughout 1832 and the ensuing years to debar King Leopold from seizing the many opportunities that offered of obtaining his revenge.

It is now necessary to refer to the various steps taken by the Dutch Government to force its views on the London Conference. On receiving the Eighteen Articles, it expressed its determination to abide by the January Protocols, and it rejected the proposed preliminaries for a definitive treaty set forth therein. On 1st August it took the formal step, preliminary to the aggressive move already described, of notifying the Powers that King William had decided "to support the negotiations by military means," and that this determination had been rendered imperious by "a Prince having put himself in possession of the country." In other words, after taking a fortnight to think it over, King William decided to make King Leopold's coronation—*i.e.*, inauguration—a *casus belli*.

Of this adventure, neither unsuccessful nor wholly successful, the story has been told. The Conference, instead of fulminating threats at what was tantamount to a defiance of its august body, replied in a very placid tone, calling upon His Majesty to suspend hostilities and recall his troops. The language was a little warmer in dealing with an imaginary intention of the Dutch to bombard Antwerp a second time, but the Dutch Foreign Minister had an easy task in repudiating an intention which had never been formed. The Conference quite ignored its own decision to compel King William to accept the Eighteen Articles.

The Dutch reply of 8th August confined itself to the repetition of the assertion that King William was a strong advocate of political consistency, and that he therefore stood by the Twelfth Protocol. He would, however, withdraw his troops if France sent hers into Belgium, because "it could never be the object of His Majesty to shed the precious blood of his Dutch subjects in fruitless enterprises." On the other hand, the Conference, having received the assurances of the French Government that it was acting with no selfish purpose, that its operations would be conducted within a defined limit, and that its troops would be withdrawn as soon as they had effected their immediate object, proceeded to propose a suspension of arms for the period of six weeks, which was agreed upon by both parties as terminating on 10th October. Having secured this respite, the Conference then proceeded to deliberate as to the measures to be adopted for the conclusion of a definitive peace between Holland and Belgium upon which the peace of Europe itself might be said to depend.

In the negotiations which followed the Conference adopted a new procedure. Instead of attempting to reconcile Dutch and Belgian views by receiving and listening to their alternate statements, it decided to give a full hearing to the Belgian exposition of their case, and then to draft a treaty of its own for submission to the Dutch Government as an ultimatum, once it had been accepted by Belgium. M. Van de Weyer exposed the Belgian views with great ability and dexterity, and King Leopold sent over Baron Stockmar to assist him by

impressing His Majesty's views on persons of influence. But times had changed, even in the few weeks since the Prince left Marlborough House, and Stockmar wrote :

"That unfortunate campaign has revived the old English principle that Holland must never be weakened. It has awakened all the English distrust and jealousy of the ulterior designs of France. It has furnished the absolutist party in the Conference with pretexts sufficiently powerful to colour the general views Dutch. It has, moreover, created in the mind of one of the English Ministers of great influence very strong prejudices, which did not exist before, against the national character of the Belgians."

On 6th October the Conference issued the first of the Protocols dealing with the new situation. This apportioned the debt of the Netherlands between the two countries on a basis more favourable to Holland, and as the six weeks' suspension of hostilities was on the eve of expiring, it obtained the extension of the armistice for a further fortnight—until the 23rd of the month. In the interval it drafted, on 15th October, the most important of all its Protocols, which embodied the famous Twenty-four Articles.*

These Articles were drawn up as a definitive treaty which was to be accepted by the two parties directly interested, as it appeared "impossible to effect any approximation between their views and opinions." There was another deviation from the previous procedure. The Protocol was accompanied by a special communication to the Belgian Plenipotentiary, inviting him to sign on the undertaking of the Conference to obtain the adhesion of Holland sooner or later. He was also apprised that the Protocol "contains *the final and irrevocable* decisions of the five Powers who of common accord are resolved to bring about the full and entire acceptance of the said Articles by the party adverse to them if the party should reject them." In addition to the special communication, there was a further letter to M. Van de Weyer, warning Belgium, through him, that, in the event of her refusing, "the Powers will employ all the means in their power to make her assent." Belgium was,

* For text, see Appendix.

therefore, threatened with the direst consequences if she did not accept the Twenty-four Articles.

The new arrangement ruled out all the clauses of the Eighteen Articles that were favourable to Belgian pretensions, and the limits of the new Kingdom were to be those fixed by the Protocols of January. The only territorial concession made to the Belgians was the inclusion of Arlon and the road to Longwy in Belgian Luxembourg. The projected treaty was, therefore, exceedingly favourable to Holland and very unfavourable to Belgium. It had, moreover, to be accepted promptly under the threat that worse would follow from refusal, and it was not concealed that the weapon to which the Conference, if flouted, would have recourse was the intervention of a German army.

Under these circumstances King Leopold had no alternative but to advise his Ministers to prepare a Bill sanctioning the adoption of the treaty by the Chambers. In his explanatory speech to the Chamber of Representatives, M. de Muelenaere, the Foreign Minister, said :

“ Europe has witnessed events which, in modifying general policy, could not but influence the question raised by our own Revolution. . . . The Powers are now in complete accord among themselves—it would be vain to disguise it—and the decisions of the Conference are as the note accompanying them says—*final and irrevocable*. It is for you to decide if what we are asked to do, if the cessions of territory required as the price of peace, may be reconciled, I will not say with the interest of our country—it is being violently infringed—I will not even say with its affections—no account is taken of them—but with its existence as an independent nation. Placed between our affections and the dominant interest of the country, having to choose between the abandonment of some of its members and the destruction of the whole family, our choice has not been free. We have been forced into the position in which you find us.”

The Chamber resolved to carry on the discussion of the treaty in secret session. After six days' stormy debate the Bill was carried on 1st November by 59 votes to 38. The

Chamber rallied to the views of the men who had taken part in the diplomatic occurrences, and who were in no sort of doubt as to the opinions held in London and Paris. As M. le Hon put it, "there is no dishonour in submitting to irresistible force."

M. Van de Weyer,* who had brought the Articles from London, returned there as soon as the Senate had endorsed the vote of the Lower Chamber, and signed the treaty with the five Powers on 15th November. The ratifications were to be exchanged within two months. Belgium, France, and England ratified it within three weeks, but the three other Powers held back, waiting, as they declared, out of courtesy for the prior adhesion of the King of Holland.

On 14th December the Dutch Government refused to accept the Twenty-four Articles, declaring that to have a treaty forced upon it was an insult to its dignity. It went on to specify certain concessions over and above those made by the Conference itself as indispensable to its adhesion. The whole question had, therefore, to be discussed over again, and the situation became once more clouded with possibilities that might lead to a general war. Fortunately, the solution of the fortresses' question in January, 1832, removed the little friction that had arisen between England and France, and their views as to the necessity of stanchly upholding Belgium became after that date more firmly held and more uniformly expressed in identical action.

The negotiations relating to the fortresses call for brief notice, more especially because they threatened to create a breach between King Louis Philippe and King Leopold. The fortresses had been constructed originally against France, and at the cost of the other Powers after 1815. Austria, Russia, Prussia, and Holland could, therefore, claim, as all had contributed to the eighteen millions expended on them, to have a voice in the decision of their fate. England, the other party to their construction, could not dispute this claim. The Plenipotentiaries of the four Powers represented on the

* Lady Morgan, in her Memoirs, gives a brief sketch of the Belgian Minister: "Van de Weyer, charming, *spirituel*, and observing. He inspires one with views and opinions similar to his own."



GENERAL GOBLET.



Conference who were interested in the matter had signed a *reserved* Protocol on 17th April, 1831, without the knowledge of the French Plenipotentiary, to the effect that "as soon as there existed in Belgium a Government recognised by them a negotiation should be opened between the four Powers and that Government with a view of determining the fortresses which should be demolished."

On 14th July this Protocol was revealed to France, but the French Government very astutely, instead of taking umbrage, read into the Protocol the most favourable intentions towards itself, and made the announcement that "the fortifications raised to threaten France, not to protect Belgium, would be demolished." The French Government did not stop with this interpretation of the secret Protocol. It sought to impose its view as a condition on Belgium. The Belgian Government was thus placed in a difficult position, for France sought to tie its hands in a matter which really rested with the four other Powers, and not with Belgium at all. During the French intervention, too, it became more awkward for Belgium to reconcile her deep gratitude to France with not merely her obligations to the other Governments, but with her capacity to keep her word if she promised France anything at all. On 8th September the Belgian Government made a declaration that it would take measures, in concert with the four Powers, for the speedy demolition of the forts at Charleroi, Mons, Tournai, Ath, and Menin.

Immediately after this declaration King Leopold sent General Goblet to London as his Plenipotentiary to negotiate on the subject of the fortresses with the Plenipotentiaries of the four Powers. The King chose General Goblet* for this mission, because he was known to the Duke of Wellington, under whom he had served during the construction of the very fortresses in question. One of his first interviews in London was with the Duke, who was strongly opposed to the demolition

* General Goblet had a very interesting and varied career. He was in the French army, and took part in the heroic defence of San Sebastian, where he became a prisoner of the British. He described his mission to London in an interesting volume entitled *My Mission to London in 1831* (published in 1863).

of any of his fortresses, and more especially to those named in the declaration of 8th September.

But more serious than the Duke's opposition was the umbrage displayed by the Powers at Belgium having taken upon herself to promise France anything at all. The old idea that Belgium was becoming, and wished to become, French was sedulously spread by those whose sympathies were with Holland. King Leopold, in a remarkable letter, impressed on his delegate the manner in which this view should be combated : " We are accused of being wholly French. We are friends, but all we desire is *our independence*. France has the same interests as we have, and the more the other Powers illtreat us the more they themselves will force us to approach her."

After much discussion, the four Powers refused to allow either Charleroi or Tournai to be dismantled, substituting for them the comparatively unimportant places of Philippeville and Marienburg. This was a disappointment for France and a source of great annoyance to King Leopold, who was thus forced into a position in which he could not keep his engagements to her. The main negotiations on the treaty of peace interrupted the separate discussion of the question of the fortresses, but after its signature by the Powers and Belgium, on 15th November, it was renewed. A formal Convention dealing exclusively with the fortresses was signed on 14th December, 1831, in London. It laid down the principle that those fortresses " of which the maintenance would henceforth constitute only a useless charge " to Belgium might be demolished, and it then expressly named Menin, Ath, Mons, Philippeville, and Marienburg for demolition. There was a secret Article attached, promising Belgium the support of the four Powers in the event of any of the preserved fortresses (including, of course, Tournai and Charleroi) being menaced.

The French Government took serious offence at this Convention, and King Louis Philippe wrote a very reproachful letter to King Leopold, saying : " I was far from expecting that the first act done in the name of your Government after the treaty of 15th November would have been of such a nature."

King Leopold felt very keenly the imputation on himself, for, as he wrote, "good faith is my second nature," and in order to show his desire to please France, he made several proposals through General Goblet for the addition of an explanatory clause to the Convention.

Lord Palmerston refused to sanction any alteration in the Convention, and declared that the language of the French was unjust and unreasonable. King Leopold, who repeatedly declared that the question of the fortresses was of no importance to Belgium, but who sincerely desired, for many reasons, to propitiate France, and to mollify Louis Philippe's anger, devised a way of effecting this by inducing the four Powers to make an explanatory declaration on 23rd January, 1832, to the effect that "all the clauses of the Convention were in perfect harmony with the character of an independent and neutral Power which had been allowed to Belgium." In view of the more pronounced unfriendly attitude of the three Powers to the general terms of peace embodied in the Twenty-four Articles, it was high time that England and France* composed their separate differences. This result was established by their ratification of the treaty of 15th November on 31st January, 1832.

In one of his letters King Leopold declared of himself and Belgium: "We are like shuttlecocks among the others." Belgium had signed the treaty of 15th November under the moral coercion of the Powers who had declared its terms (the Twenty-four Articles) to be "*final and irrevocable*." The Powers had also undertaken to compel King William to accept it after Belgium had done so. The rejection of the treaty by the Dutch Government's despatch of 14th December was, therefore, a defiance. It received the moral support of the three Absolutist Powers, who had made the prior adhesion of King William the condition of their ratification. To add to

* General Belliard did his utmost to convince his Government that King Leopold had nothing to do with the initiation of the negotiations about the fortresses. During the most critical phase of the question he paid four visits to Paris in ten days, travelling night and day. This undermined his health, and on 28th January, 1832, he succumbed to a sudden attack of apoplexy on a seat in the park at Brussels. General Belliard is justly called one of the makers of modern Belgium.

the uncertainty, there was doubt as to whether King William would refrain from further military action. He maintained a large army near the Belgian frontier, and made ostentatious efforts to increase his military forces. On the other hand, King Leopold, resolved not to be taken a second time by surprise, had arranged to meet every eventuality, and would have been only too glad if the Dutch had given him an opportunity of wiping out the memories of the ten days' campaign.* During this critical period King Leopold not merely guided the diplomacy, but personally controlled the military reorganisation of his country. In one of his private letters he wrote : " As regards Belgium in its present condition, the State means myself. I am the atlas on whose shoulders rests our little Kingdom."

On 1st December, King Leopold, in presenting the first Belgian flag to one of his newly organised regiments, took the opportunity of delivering a spirited address :

Belgians ! You have fought for centuries under the banners of foreign Sovereigns with valour and fidelity. To-day the position of your country is changed. She takes her place in the family of the old monarchies. After so many sanguinary and fruitless struggles the Belgians have become an independent nation. For the first time the Belgian lion (referring to the gilt lion at the top of the flagstaff) will march at the head of the Belgian troops. Continue to display under the national standard the brilliant qualities which gained you esteem in the service of strangers. Remember also that as the army of a nation you are entering the ranks of the old European armies, and that your honour demands that you should take a distinguished place among them. The brave and firm conduct of this regiment during the difficult days of last August gained my esteem and sincere approval, and I have pleasure in repeating this here publicly. Since those occurrences its loyal conduct and good discipline have strengthened my feelings. You are the first regiment to receive at my hands the national flag. In receiving it you contract towards your country and towards me the most sacred engagement. May you ever justify my confidence. Take, then, as your motto : " Bravery, honour, and fidelity."

King William, despite the Protocols with which the Conference had rejoined to his objections and insisted upon the acceptance of its conditions, remained obdurate in refusing to accept the Twenty-four Articles. He declared that he would perish sooner than yield. But King William was beginning to

* Forty thousand Belgian troops were concentrated at Diest. The army was raised to a total of over 100,000 men, and the war budget more than doubled (from 31,000,000 to 73,000 000 francs). King Leopold also engaged the services of a strong contingent from the lately disbanded Polish army.

wear out the patience of his friends. In Berlin and Vienna the desire sprang up to get rid of the Belgian problem. It was seen that the principle of the neutrality of Belgium was a safeguard for European peace. The same opinion began to be held at St. Petersburg, but before it was acted on the Emperor Nicholas sent Count Orloff to The Hague to try and induce the King to give way. The mission failed, but it provided the Russian Court with a decorous excuse for acting with the other Powers. On 18th April, Austria and Prussia ratified the treaty of 15th November, and early in May, Russia, with certain reservations as to obtaining some concessions for Holland, followed suit. The Twenty-four Articles were thus finally accepted by everyone concerned excepting the King of Holland.

The successful termination of the difficulties with the Powers paved the way to King Leopold's marriage with Louis Philippe's daughter, the Princess Louise of Orleans and France. A marriage of the chosen King of the Belgians, whoever he might prove to be, with a French Princess had been from the beginning one of the proposals for placing the new régime in Belgium on a firm basis by propitiating French opinion. At the end of May, King Leopold paid a State visit to the French King at Compiègne, and his marriage with the Princess Louise was arranged during the visit, and formally announced before his departure. This alliance was not merely advantageous in a general sense, but it gave King Leopold the means of impressing his views more strongly on Louis Philippe, and of thus instigating French policy when it seemed inclined to flag in its support of Belgium.

By accepting the qualified ratification of the treaty given by Russia, M. Van de Weyer had opened the door for fresh negotiations, and General Goblet was sent to London on a second special mission. He brought with him his Sovereign's formal declaration that he would not participate in any negotiation on the "reserved" Articles before the treaty had been executed in respect of the *non-reserved* Articles. The practical meaning of this was that Holland must give up possession of Antwerp citadel before Belgium would consent to discuss the

changes and modifications proposed by Russia in the Articles referring to the navigation of the Scheldt and the arrangement of the debt.

An unpleasant incident had occurred in April to make it appear more than ever desirable to conclude the matter. M. Thorn, the Belgian Governor of Luxembourg, had displayed considerable energy in dealing with a semi-military, semi-marauding band led by a Swiss adventurer named Tornaco, who was endeavouring to restore King William's authority throughout the Grand Duchy. Thorn arrested several of these men and treated them as ordinary disturbers of the peace. Tornaco in turn planned an attack on the Governor's residence at Schoenfeltz, and succeeded in carrying him off to the town of Luxembourg, where the Dutch Governor promptly imprisoned him in the fortress.* There was a tremendous outcry in Belgium at the outrage, and this incident strengthened King Leopold's hands in showing the Powers that there was a limit to the patience of Belgium now that she had an army ready to take the field. The Belgian Chamber presented a loyal address to the King, promising him the national support at all costs. It contained the following passages :

"The Chamber has faith in the engagements contracted, and believes that the treaty will be carried out and our territory evacuated. But if our confidence should be deceived ; if Holland persisted in rejecting the arrangements proposed to her ; if she were to continue her acts of hostility, her violations of territory ; if, above all, she refused to repair without delay the outrage committed on one of our fellow-citizens, a member, too, of our Legislature ; if events, which God forbid, were to trouble the peace of Europe, and render vain all the sacrifices made in the cause of peace—then, Sire, we would remember that the cost of no effort should count for a people when their life and their honour were at stake."†

While it was satisfactory to King Leopold to know that he

* M. Thorn was kept eight months in confinement, notwithstanding that the Belgians seized a Dutch official in Luxembourg and held him as a hostage.

† It was about this time that King Leopold wrote : " You can tell Lord Palmerston that the Conference, when I think of it, gives me the heartache."

had the opinion of the Belgian people behind him, the question to be settled was, as he well knew, diplomatic rather than military, and he had to secure what was possible rather than display a noble but useless tenacity in demanding what was ideal but unattainable. The principle put forward that nothing should be done until Holland had evacuated Belgian territory was held to be inadmissible by the London Conference and also by Lord Palmerston, who had now definitely accepted the rôle of the upholder of Belgium's rights. Holland made certain overtures on 30th June, 1832, for a treaty based on the territorial division of 15th November, 1831, with additions which were in themselves not unreasonable. These proposals called for consideration. They might in themselves be acceptable or the reverse, but at least they precluded the possibility of the Powers saying to Holland: "We will not look at them till you have evacuated Belgium." If the Powers were agreed in their own body, they might have acted consistently on these lines by upholding the very letter of their own decisions, but they were really divided into two camps—one for Belgium, the other for Holland.

The Belgian Ministry, in accordance with the vote in the Chamber, would not listen to any compromise, and insisted that Holland should be called upon to evacuate Belgian territory by a specified date, and, failing compliance, that she should be compelled to do so by either the Powers or Belgium. M. Van de Weyer was instructed to bring this decision to the knowledge of Lord Palmerston in August, and it was hoped in Brussels that the Dutch rejection of the last Protocol of 13th July, which had been intended as a concession to Holland, would induce the British Plenipotentiary to sanction extreme measures. But Lord Palmerston did not at the moment adopt the advice pressed upon him, and he pointed out its dangers:

"My devotion to King Leopold is real and unfeigned. It is with true sorrow, therefore, that I see his Ministers' policy. It will compromise the King and the independence of Belgium. They want preliminary evacuation. But this evacuation is possible only by virtue of King William's adhesion to the Twenty-four Articles. Now, how are we to obtain this adhesion

pure and simple ? By coercive measures ? Well, I tell you honestly we shall not have recourse to them. It would be inexcusable in us to employ them whilst we have room to believe that negotiations may induce a solution in conformity with the engagements we have made with Belgium. The nation would never sanction such a measure, and if England refuses, as she must, to have recourse to force, France, undoubtedly will not follow a different course. But in this case you say Belgium, alone, will make war ; she, alone, will compel Holland to sign the Twenty-four Articles ! I answer that the war which is so lightly spoken of in Belgium is the course most perilous to your future, to your independence, to your King's throne, and at the same time most hurtful to your commercial and industrial interests."

King Leopold had himself come very much to the same conclusion; for he wrote almost on the day of this interview to General Goblet : " We must hear the proposals of Holland. If she offers an acceptable and speedy end, accept them. If they be treacherous, refuse them, and insist upon the treaty." Out of the discussions between Lord Palmerston and the two Belgian representatives* (Van de Weyer and Goblet) there issued a fresh proposal early in September, which embodied Belgium's irreducible minimum ; but as it contained an important suggestion by the British Minister, it became known as Lord Palmerston's theme. One of the chief stumbling-blocks in the later negotiations had been the question of the navigation of the Scheldt, which up to this stage had been treated as a question concerning Holland and Belgium alone. Lord Palmerston in his theme took up the new ground that this was a question affecting all European Powers equally, and that it should be treated on that footing.

General Goblet took the proposal to Brussels, and King Leopold accepted it at once. But his Ministers raised difficulties, declaring that they were bound by their pledges to the

* In addition to the accredited representatives King Leopold sent his *fidus Achates*, Baron Stockmar, whom he once described as " more of a friend than a servant," to London. Baron Stockmar was in close touch with Palmerston, and strongly supported his suggestion to consider the Dutch proposals.

Chamber. On the King remaining firm in his opinion that the negotiations should go on, they resigned, and some difficulty was experienced in forming a new Administration. The King showed admirable patience in his difficulties, and the incident derived special importance from the circumstance that it brought Charles Rogier into the political arena. General Goblet took charge of the Foreign Department, where he had the able assistance of M. Nothomb, and succeeded in forming one of the strongest Ministries that Belgium has ever possessed. An Administration being thus formed in Belgium willing to adopt the latest Dutch suggestion of direct negotiation between the two interested parties, it only remained to be seen whether King William was sincere in what he proposed. On the formation of General Goblet's Government, M. Van de Weyer returned to London, and informed the Conference that he had been authorised to negotiate with Holland.

The true intentions of the Dutch Government were not long concealed. On the Belgian representative announcing his readiness to treat, the Dutch Minister replied that he had his Sovereign's orders not to negotiate at all, owing to the concessions which the Conference had made to Belgium. Lord Palmerston, who had believed in the plausible statements of the Dutch, and who had urged the Belgians to meet them half-way, now saw that coercion in some form or other would be necessary. On 1st October the Conference decided that coercive measures were necessary, but only England and France agreed that they should be efficacious and physical. Belgium declared the separate negotiations to be ended, called for the effective execution of the treaty of 15th November, 1831, and announced her intention, if the Powers did nothing, of turning out the Dutch with her own forces.

A few days later, the French Government, strongly supporting the Belgian case, offered the British Government its co-operation in the necessary measures to bring about the expulsion of the Dutch from Belgium, and more especially from the citadel of Antwerp. The outcome of this offer was an Anglo-French Convention, signed on 22nd October in London, by which the two Powers undertook to coerce Holland

unless she gave a promise by 2nd November to evacuate Belgian territory before the 12th of that month. The coercive measures were to be the seizure of Dutch ships, the establishment of a blockade by the stationing of an Anglo-French fleet off the coast of Holland, and the capture of Antwerp citadel by a French army. On 29th October a defiant refusal to comply with the requirements of the two Powers was received from The Hague, and it was then reluctantly admitted in London that all the efforts made during nearly twelve months to put the treaty of 15th November, 1831, in effect had failed, and that no alternative remained but an appeal to force. King William IV., who was not merely friendly disposed towards his namesake at The Hague, but slightly biassed against King Leopold, said, on signing the orders of blockade: "Let it be done; I see there is no other way." On 4th November the French army crossed into Belgium on its march to Antwerp.

On 13th November, King Leopold delivered the following address at the opening of the Chambers in Brussels:

"Gentlemen,—The four months which have passed since the close of the last session have produced events which must have an important effect on the future condition of the country.

"Belgium has been recognised by the Powers of Europe in succession, and the national flag admitted into most foreign ports.

"My union with the eldest daughter of the King of the French, whilst it has brought closer the ties which connect us with a generous people, has afforded a fresh occasion for my receiving from most of the Courts of Europe proofs of amity and wishes for the consolidation and prosperity of the new Belgian State.

"After long delays, which, however, have been less prejudicial to the interests of the country than might have been expected, the moment has at length arrived when I have the happiness of responding to the wishes of the Chamber and the nation by inducing the Powers who guarantee the treaty of 15th November to assure its execution.

"The Powers were convinced that if they longer abstained

from having recourse to coercive measures they would place Belgium in the imminent necessity of doing justice to herself, and they did not wish to incur the risk of a general war. Bound by a formal Convention, two of them are pledged to commence the immediate evacuation of our territory. The united fleets of France and England restrain the commerce of Holland, and if these means of coercion be not sufficient, in two days a French army will come, without disturbing the peace of Europe, to prove that the pledges given were not vain words.

“Such, gentlemen, are the results of the policy that has been pursued by the Government. It is with confidence I will cause to be submitted to your examination the negotiations which have produced these results.

“The solution of the difficulties which have impeded the course of the Government will permit it now to apply itself more exclusively to the administration and financial amelioration which the interests of the country require.

“Already the organisation of the judicial power has completed the political constitution of the State, and placed the independence of the magistrates on definitive bases.

“At the same time that the Budget of 1833 will be submitted to you there will be placed before you the accounts of 1830 and 1831.

“The second part of the loan which you authorised has been contracted for on advantageous terms, all circumstances being taken into consideration. These circumstances, common in all the countries of Europe, have caused an increase of expenditure to Belgium, which must be met by a corresponding increase of burthens.

“The country will see the propriety of submitting to necessary sacrifices when it casts its eyes around and observes that, notwithstanding the important events which have occurred, it has never existed under a system of taxation as moderate and light as the present.

“If the execution of the treaty by the Powers who have declared themselves the guarantors for that purpose should prevent our young and gallant army from signalling its valour, I place sufficient reliance in its devotion to feel assured.

that in the progress of events which are now preparing themselves, the violation of the territory by the enemy or any other act of aggression against Belgium would not take place with impunity.

“The interests of the army are the object of my earnest solicitude. It is still difficult to fix the period for disarming, though that measure has now become more probable. A project of law, relative to the organisation of the army in time of peace, will, however, be submitted to you. Promotions, pensions, the allowances for active service and retirement, will also be the subject of specific laws.

“Some imperfections have been remarked in the laws relative to the civic guard and the militia. The ameliorations suggested by experience will be proposed to you. Some parts of our penal legislation will also be subjected to a revision, which will place them in harmony with the institutions and the morality of the country.

“The general situation of the country continues to be satisfactory. The result has proved that the fears entertained respecting the future condition of our commerce and industry were exaggerated. I am happy to have it in my power to inform you that the revenues of the State for the current year exceed all anticipations. New communications have been opened in the interior, and others are in preparation, and I am incessantly occupied with the task of opening new channels of trade and extending our foreign commercial relations.

“We approach a great event. The enfranchisement of our territory must contribute to strengthen public confidence; but you must reflect with sorrow that Belgium, whole and entire, has not been adopted by Europe. When the day of separation shall arrive, you will not be unmindful of the services rendered by populations which associated themselves with so much devotion to our cause. They have not ceased to occupy my thoughts. They deserve to engross those of the nation. Belgium may continue to be the country of their choice.”

Only one other incident of this period calls for notice before closing this chapter. The King's first visit to Compiègne in May, when his marriage with the Princess Louise was arranged,

has been mentioned, but the delays in fixing the date of the ceremony proved very trying. In the critical state of affairs, with so much uncertainty as to the intentions of the different Courts, it was highly desirable, from the dynastic as well as the Belgian point of view, to get the marriage over and the ties between France and Belgium assured.

King Leopold did everything on his side to expedite matters. He guaranteed a generous dowry out of his own fortune if the Belgian Chamber failed to vote the sum required by the French Court. He agreed that all the children of the marriage should be brought up in the Catholic faith. All he was insistent about was that there should be no delay, and at last his energy prevailed over the slow-moving purposes of Louis Philippe. The marriage was celebrated at Compiègne on 9th August, 1832, and proved an exceedingly happy one. The Belgian people gave their first Queen an enthusiastic reception. From the French frontier to the Palace at Laeken the newly wedded couple drove through scenes of cordial and universal welcome. The ovation partook of the nature of a national triumph. It was said at a later date by a brilliant orator :

“ The union, which received the Benediction in the Chapel of Compiègne, revealed to astonished nations two facts of the first importance—the alliance of France and England, which was formed on that very occasion, and which was then the safeguard of the peace of the world, and the recognition of Belgian neutrality, which fixed in a rational and durable manner the limits—so long uncertain and disputed—of neighbouring nations.”

A more personal and familiar note is struck in the following extract from a letter written by King Leopold to General Goblet a week after the marriage : “ I am delighted with my good little Queen : she is the sweetest creature you ever saw, and she has plenty of wits. We were received with the most lively enthusiasm throughout the country.”

CHAPTER X.

The Siege of Antwerp.

Two years had elapsed since the bombardment of the city of Antwerp, when the French, in November, 1832, undertook the task of expelling the Dutch garrison from its citadel. During that period General Chassé had stood on his guard waiting orders from The Hague with which his communications by water were never interrupted, and exercising the influence of a constant menace over the minds of the citizens. They had experienced the horrors of one bombardment ; at any moment the turn of events might cause another, and they were helpless to avert or overcome it. The menace was always there. General Chassé declined to hold any communication with the town, and his stern and unyielding character left no ground to hope that he would spare if ordered or induced to strike.

From time to time there were rumours of approaching trouble. The advanced lunette of St. Laurent, at the south-east angle of the citadel, was the point on which the Belgians had fixed for attack in the event of their having to assail the citadel by themselves, and, in anticipation of such a contingency, they were constantly adding to the strength of the batteries they had erected in front of it. General Chassé complained of these movements as breaches of the armistice that had been concluded on the intervention of the Powers, and on one occasion at least the Dutch and Belgians came into hostile collision at this point. But, with this exception, during the whole of the two years mentioned there had been no fighting at Antwerp. Even when General Chassé, on 1st August, 1831, announced the resumption of hostilities, and created a general panic, not merely in Antwerp, but even in Brussels, where he

was credited with the intention of destroying Holland's rival in commerce, no armed collision took place. While the ten days' campaign was in progress in the open field no firing occurred at Antwerp, and General Chassé remained content with the possessions that he had held so long, and from which he felt confident that no force controlled by Belgium would ever oust him. His mere presence, backed up by the Dutch fleet which blockaded the Scheldt, was sapping the prosperity of Antwerp to the core.

The only strikingly dramatic incident of this period occurred on the water. The eight gunboats of the Scheldt flotilla were anchored in the river. On 5th February, 1831, during a severe gale, one of them lost its anchors, and went adrift. Despite the efforts of its commander, Lieutenant Van Speyck, and the crew of thirty-one men, the boat grounded on the river-bank. A party of Belgian volunteers, perceiving the accident, resolved to secure the prize, and rushed on board. The young officer, seeing that resistance was hopeless, hurried to his cabin, opened the door of the powder-magazine, and fired his pistol into it. A tremendous explosion followed. Only two of the crew escaped, and among the Belgians who got on board there were ten killed and twenty-one wounded. Van Speyck was at once elevated to the rank of a national hero in Holland, and was granted a public monument in the new Church of Amsterdam.

King William, although in one of his Proclamations he had announced his determination not to risk the precious lives of his Dutch soldiers in hopeless enterprises, refused to order General Chassé to evacuate the citadel on the approach of the French army, but at the same time he informed his commander that he must not expect any assistance, and would have to rely entirely on his own resources. His apologists declare that, even at this eleventh hour, the Dutch ruler had not abandoned all hope of carrying his point and recovering Belgium. The Russian Emperor was more than sympathetic, Prussia announced her intention to send troops to the neighbourhood of Venloo, and Austria had, not less firmly than the others, refused to have anything to do with coercive measures directed

against Holland. If Antwerp citadel could make a protracted defence, if the French army could only be decimated in the misty and malarious Valley of the Scheldt, there was no telling what might happen yet. Some other solution of the difficulty might be found which would save the King of Holland from signing away his rights and acquiescing in the hard facts. He seemed all through the discussion and development of the question to find the act of acquiescence harder to bear than the facts themselves.

For the defence of the citadel of Antwerp Chassé disposed of an amply sufficient force—viz., 4,500 men—and some of the critics of the defence considered that, in comparison to the cramped space, the garrison was too large, and that it would have been wiser to have sent some of it back to Holland. Two serious defects also existed in the defence. The supply of stores was just sufficient, but not as ample as it should have been. No attempt was made to render all the casemates bomb-proof; some were, but the majority were not. The walls and ramparts were exceedingly solid and strong, but much damage was caused inside by the fire of the mortars, which threw their shells over the outer defences, and injured not merely the galleries of communication, but the main well of the place, which became choked up with the débris from the demolished roofs and walls of the inner defences. Chassé had neglected to strengthen the citadel in the belief that it would never be subjected to a really heavy bombardment. Consequently the citadel was not in the state of strength with which it was generally credited, and King William had no reason for supposing that it could make a long defence against an attack.

The entrance of the French troops into Belgium for a second time was preceded by a regular Convention defining the exact part to be taken by them and the Belgian army. By the Anglo-French Convention it was stipulated that as soon as the French had captured the citadel they were to hand it over to the Belgians and to return to France. But it was also necessary to define exactly the rôle of the Belgian troops. At first the French wished King Leopold to withdraw all his troops from Antwerp, but as it was impossible to say whether



GENERAL CHASSÉ.

From a Dutch print of the period.



the Dutch might not take the offensive in certain eventualities, this extreme step was modified, and 6,000 Belgian troops were left in the city.

It was also arranged that the bulk of the Belgian army should be concentrated to the right—that is, to the east and north-east—of Antwerp, in readiness to oppose the army of the Prince of Orange if he should take the field. King Leopold established his headquarters at Lierre, and in a letter to General Desprez, one of the French officers whom he had nominated Chief of the Staff, he wrote: “No doubt the part given us to play is not one of the most amusing. It is even a little humiliating.* I repair, however, to Lierre, that I may be nearer. The Orangemen make out that Chassé is going to fire on the city; they hope so—the kind creatures!—and flatter themselves *that is the true aim of his resistance*. I don’t believe it, but as long as that is not quite plain I should like to be near those of my children who will find themselves most exposed to danger.” Finally, the French Government demanded that Belgium should defray the cost of the expedition. This the Belgian Government firmly refused to do, and the claim did not figure in the Convention.

The second arrangement preliminary to the siege of the citadel was effected between Marshal Gérard and General Chassé. The mission of the French General was to oust the Dutch garrison, but this was to be done without injury to the city of Antwerp, which the Powers had warned Holland in August, 1831, at the time of the Prince of Orange’s irruption into Belgium, they took under their special protection. It was

* King Leopold, who was most anxious to fight at the head of his army, knew well how much personally he would have at stake in a single-handed trial of strength with Holland. Yet he had no misgivings about the result, as the following letter, describing his army, shows:

“10th July, 1832.

“I do not think the Dutch would find their account in attacking us. I have been making a round with which I was extremely well satisfied. On the 5th, at Malines, I inspected the 8th Regiment of the Line—very fine and strong—and three batteries of artillery. Thence I went to Fort St. Margaret. On the 6th I inspected at Antwerp the 6th and 5th, as well as all the Civic Guard. The same day I inspected the 3rd Foot Chasseurs and the 1st Lancers at Turnhout. On the 7th I inspected the 9th and the 1st Horse Chasseurs at Herenthals (these two regiments are particularly fine), and the 7th and the Eickholt battery at Nylen. The troops are very fine and extremely *well disposed*.”

necessary, therefore, to come to terms with the Dutch commander for the limitation of the areas of defence and attack. The French commander bound himself not to attack the north side of the fortress, which was its weakest point, because by doing so he would be drawing its fire on the city, and General Chassé undertook to respect an arrangement by which the French attack should be considered as exclusively directed upon the southern or external side of the fortress entrusted to his charge. General Chassé was also apprised that England and France would hold him responsible for any damage done to the town by either his guns or those of the Scheldt flotilla, and that a full indemnity would be exacted. By common consent, then, the city of Antwerp was to be regarded by the combatants as outside the field of operations.

The citadel of Antwerp was situated at the western extremity of the southern side of the then existing *enceinte*, and was protected on the western side by the Scheldt. In the modern city of to-day its site is to be found between the Quai Cockerill and the Avenue du Sud. The new picture-gallery stands upon part of the ground covered by the lunette of St. Laurent. The French attack in the first stage of the siege* was mainly directed against this outwork, and in the second, after its capture on the Toledo bastion, part of the main work of the citadel. Although the Dutch had added to and modernised it, much of the structure was in precisely the state left by its original constructor, the Duke of Alva.

The army placed under the orders of Marshal Gérard was practically the same that he had led a year earlier into Belgium, with the addition of a large siege artillery and engineer contingent. The cavalry was also more numerous. According to the official returns, it contained 50,000 infantry, 12,000 cavalry, and 8,000 artillery and engineers. Of this total of 70,000 rather more than 10,000 were stationed on the left bank of the

* An interesting account of the siege is given in a little volume published in 1833, and entitled *Antwerp and its Siege*, by Captain Hon. C. S. (tuart) W(ortley). General Haxo, the French engineer in command, wrote the text-book of the siege. The siege was watched by a good many English officers, among whom may be named Colin Campbell, afterwards Lord Clyde. These had not forgotten Chassé's good work at Waterloo, and were quite as much interested in the defence as in the attack.

Scheldt to operate against the forts on that side of the river. General Sebastiani, son of the Foreign Minister, had the command of this force, but, as General Chassé cut the sluices and inundated the country, he had no opportunity of doing anything. The bulk of the cavalry under the Duke of Orleans was stationed north-east of Antwerp at Braschaet, and divisions were quartered at Malines and Merxhem, where a temporary bridge was thrown across the Scheldt to insure communications being kept open with the force under Sebastiani. Thus the main body operating against the citadel did not exceed 40,000 men.

The operations began during the night of 29th November by the French throwing up their first trenches, or advanced parallel within 600 yards of the bastions and half that distance of the lunette without encountering the smallest opposition. The first gun was fired at twelve o'clock on the following day, when the attack may be said to have commenced in earnest. Originally the French troops spoke of their march to Antwerp as "an affair of a fortnight" (*une promenade d'une quinzaine*), but the obstinacy of the Dutch defence soon proved that it would not be so brief. Throughout the defence Chassé seemed to reserve his fire, leaving the enemy to gain their ends by battering down his defences if they could. The stout walls, that owed their origin to Alva, and retained their Spanish names, took a tremendous lot of hammering. The lunette of St. Laurent was not captured till 14th December, and after this preliminary but essential success, the French attack became concentrated on the effort to breach the Toledo bastion. On the 23rd of the month the bastion was breached, many of the defences of the place were destroyed, and everything was ready for an assault, when General Chassé, having done all that a brave man could do, hung out the white flag, and agreed to surrender. On the following day the Dutch troops laid down their arms on the glacis, but as their commander refused to give his parole that they would not fight again in the event of hostilities continuing, they were marched some days later as prisoners into France.

The Dutch loss during the siege was returned at a grand

total of 562, while that of the French amounted to 367 killed, 348 wounded, and 1,016 invalided, the greater number of the latter being in Sebastiani's force, which had no fighting. During the three weeks' bombardment the French guns fired 65,000 rounds into the place. The Dutch squadron of the Scheldt, under Colonel Koopman, endeavoured to escape, but was prevented by the guns of the forts (Nord and Marie) on the left bank, which had also surrendered. Sooner than surrender, Koopman burnt five of his gunboats and sank seven others. He was taken prisoner himself, but many of the crews escaped to the Dutch forts at Lillo and Liefkenshoek.

General Chassé became the hero of the day, and the fame of his defence has not yet departed. The following account of his interview with some English officers is interesting :*

"Colonel Caradoc, as British Commissioner, attended by Sir George Hamilton as his aide-de-camp, proceeded to the citadel to obtain an interview with General Chassé. They found him in a small square room, eight or ten feet wide, with bare walls of stone and one window. He appeared well in health and spirits, except that he was a good deal crippled by a disease in his legs, which prevented him from moving about much. The moment they entered the room he raised himself as much as he could from the chair, and seized Colonel Caradoc's hands with both of his in the most cordial and hearty manner. Having offered them wine and refreshment, and made them sit down with him, he entered into the most interesting conversation respecting the siege, speaking in the highest terms of the devotion of his garrison, saying that their hardships and privations had been most acute, and that they had defended the place as long as it was tenable. He spoke of the Duke of Wellington in the most enthusiastic terms of admiration and respect. He said he had served under him, and had had opportunities of witnessing his splendid military talents, and to have his admiration and esteem was what he most wished for. I afterwards heard that the Duke wrote to him in the

* *Antwerp and its Siege, op. cit.*

most flattering terms, and praising him most highly for his brave defence."

King William was, of course, delighted with the conduct of his General, and wrote him an autograph letter of thanks. He raised him to the highest grade of the William Order, and sent him his own star as a proof of his gratitude. The King also refused to sanction the surrender of Forts Lillo and Liefkenshoek, because to have done so would have been to ratify the loss of Antwerp. The too prompt retirement of the French army left them in his possession until the final settlement in 1839.

Just as the Dutch reputation had gained far out of proportion with the reality of its achievement by the ten days' campaign, so did King William score again over the defence of Antwerp in a degree that he could never have expected. Chassé became not merely a national, but a European hero, and the powerful agent of popular sympathy was again operating on the side of Holland. The very Powers who had forbidden King Leopold to act, who had tied down the Belgian army by threats to inaction in the field, began to assume towards the Belgians the airs and attitude of patrons. If statesmen and diplomatists, forgetting their own proceedings, put on a demeanour of condescension, the public in England, and even to a certain extent in France also, affected to despise the race that had to import others to fight its battles. Public prejudice never reasons, and holds facts in contempt. It was the Powers themselves who chained Belgium's action; it was the friendly Powers who compelled King Leopold to hold the fine army he had created in leash lest the hostile Powers should take action on behalf of Holland. For obeying their orders King Leopold risked his popularity and position in Belgium, and weakened his hold on the national force which clamoured to be led to meet the foe. He had also to place the most severe restraint on his own desires. He wanted nothing better than to recover Antwerp himself, or to meet the Prince of Orange once more in the field. He felt confident of success, and there can be no doubt that he knew well what he was talking about.

For the Belgian reputation, it is a pity he was not allowed a

free hand. Looking back at the events of that period from the standpoint of the present age, it must be admitted, however, that the averting of a serious collision between Belgium and Holland was a providential service to Europe. The bitter feelings of a political separation were not inflamed by the incidents of a sanguinary war. The quarrel of the brother races was not handed down as a blood-feud from generation to generation. The healing influence of time was left undisturbed to work its own solution, so that eventually Belgians and Dutch might come together again as equals and friends to uphold against all comers the national rights and separate entities of the Netherlands.

During the siege of the citadel King Leopold paid several visits to Antwerp. He visited the trenches during the bombardment, and only gave up the amusement at the urgent entreaty of his young wife not to expose himself unnecessarily. He made copious notes on the proceedings of the French, which he watched closely from a tower in the city, and when the garrison surrendered he had everything in readiness to take over charge from the French. There was no delay on their side either, for King Louis Philippe was most anxious to get his troops back to France as soon as possible, and thus prove his good faith in the eyes of the British Government. On 31st December the Dutch troops assembled on the glacis, with General Chassé at their head, and began their march for France, escorted by the French army. Immediately afterwards the Belgian troops, under General Desprez, marched in and took formal possession of the citadel. It is true that in the official "Moniteur" the announcement of the recall of the army was accompanied by the assurance that "the French army remains ever ready to fly to the aid of Belgium if her independence should again be attacked," but the withdrawal must be considered precipitate and premature.

The omission of the French to effect the evacuation of the forts at Lillo and Liefkenshoek left the Dutch in command of the river, but at the same time this retention furnished the Belgians with a reasonable excuse for holding on to the parts of Limburg and Luxembourg which they were required to

surrender under the Twenty-four Articles. The Belgian Foreign Office summed up its views on this matter in a note to the following effect: "The treaty of 15th November was not *our doing*; it was imposed on us. Bending under a necessity against which it would have been madness to struggle, we accepted it, and we have made it part of our public law. Our duty is to maintain it; that of removing, or of at least finding the means of removing, the difficulties which prevent the other party from accepting it—in other words, inducing it to yield—that duty belongs wholly to those who decided the matter." This declaration signified that the Powers could not expect Belgium, who had accepted the treaty, to give up to Holland, who had not accepted it, some territory without receiving the other territory specified therein.

Two incidents arose out of the French expedition that claim brief notice. The first is especially interesting, because it throws light on the state of public opinion in Belgium, which was then often thought in England to be more French than national. On the return of the French army the ultra-royalist press of Paris declared that if the Bourbons had remained on the throne Belgium would have become a French possession. This baseless assumption, from every point of view, received the following well-merited rebuke in the leading Catholic—that is, Conservative—journal of Brussels:

"There would be no end if one were to attempt to animadvert upon all the inaccuracies and all the exaggerations which our neighbours daily set down to our account. Such, amongst others, is the illusion they have about a pretended hankering on the part of Belgium for incorporation with France. They persist in this blindness. However, after the two expeditions made by the French army into our provinces, they might easily have undeceived themselves, and they must find pleasure in their mistake not to alter their tone after this double experience. They know that our allies were received with good-will, but without enthusiasm, as friends, but not as compatriots. The Belgians remained Belgians at the sight of the tricolour flag; our soldiers, whilst embracing old brothers-in-arms, did not forget their country; the two armies did not

become fused—each remained under its own flag ; our liberators were able to return without having to combat our anxiety to detain them ; they carry with them our sentiments of grateful acknowledgment, but not our regrets at this separation.”

The only memorial of the French intervention in 1832, made not, as is usually said, on behalf of Belgium, but to fulfil the stipulations of the Anglo-French Convention, is the column erected at Tournai, through which city the bulk of Marshal Gérard's army passed on its way to Antwerp. The second incident of interest relates to another and very different memorial—the mound crowned with the lion on the field of Waterloo.

On the occasion of the first French intervention, in 1831, the Belgian Government had expressed its gratitude and thanks to that of France, but there had been no formal vote in the Chambers. The Belgian Government, which was a little chilled at heart by the curious, if correct, attitude of the intervening Powers, and which had been corrected for using the phrase that they were going to war with Holland in Belgium's behalf, would have liked the earlier precedent to be followed again, and the French army to be allowed to depart with as little fuss and noise as possible. Excessive gratitude would seem to carry with it an unnecessary and undeserved reflection on Belgian courage and conduct, and might be interpreted as meaning that Belgium admitted that France had done for her what she felt helpless to do for herself. The occasion was evidently one for displaying great self-restraint and employing moderate language.

The Government reckoned without M. Alexandre Gendebien, whose profound gallophilism got the better of the little judgment he possessed. On 29th December he proposed two motions to the Chamber. The first was a vote of thanks to the French army for the services it had rendered to Belgium in the month of August, 1831, and again in December, 1832. The second motion was in every way more perilous and unwise. It was to remove the Lion Monument at Mont St. Jean, marking the field of Waterloo. M. Gendebien supported his own motion with the following commentary : “ By the second part

of my proposition I invite you to free yourself from the vassalage of the Holy Alliance by causing the disappearance of the hateful emblem of the despotism and violence which made us subject for fifteen years to the humiliating yoke which we cast off in September, 1830. I propose to substitute for it a funereal monument which, while preserving the sad memory of a fact that belongs to history, shall transmit to posterity our regret for the noble victims from the four quarters of the world heaped together on those fields of carnage and mourning." To the remark that the removal of the monument might hurt the susceptibilities of England, he replied that he considered such fears to be exaggerated, and he then concluded with the general declaration: "When the English army shall have rendered to my country services like those we have received from the French army, I shall be the first to vote it due thanks."

As a matter of fact, there was no ground for supposing that English susceptibilities were involved in the fate of the lion and its mound. England had had nothing to do with that monument. She had not contributed a shilling nor a spadeful of earth to its erection. The lion is not the English lion; there is, as a matter of fact, no memorial to English soldiers on the field of Waterloo. The mound was the idea of King William and the work of Belgian women, who gathered the clay in basketfuls at so many sous apiece. The lion is the lion of the Netherlands—of Brabant, in strict heraldic lore—cast in the foundry of Cockerill at Liège; but there is an important difference, and the true cause and manner of the change are obscure. The lion of the Netherlands carries its tail erect, in the attitude of defiance; the lion on the mound, seen by every visitor to the field, carries his in a graceful downward sweep. How and whence the change? In the original model in the Cockerill establishment the tail is said to have been erect; but as the model was no longer in existence fifty years ago this assertion is more than dubious. According to one story, the French, on marching past in 1831, testified their displeasure by breaking off the tail. That is the popular opinion in Belgium, but the most careful search of the available records

of the time has failed to discover any proof of this. Those who adhere to this view declare that in effecting the repairs the new tail was given the less aggressive turn, which signifies expectancy rather than defiance.

A careful examination of all the circumstances recorded in contemporary records, including the collection of prints in the Musée des Estampes at Brussels, does not support any of these suppositions. The first specific reference to the lion is made by M. Saintine, a French traveller, who, in October, 1829, visited the spot, and caustically mentions "the lion on the mound—the Belgic lion looking towards and apparently threatening France." The Belgian prints earlier in the same year show the actual hoisting of the lion into its position, and the figure of the lion itself, with the drooping tail precisely as it is at present. In face of this clear and irrefutable evidence, the suggestion that the French soldiers damaged it, or that the Belgians modified it to spare French susceptibilities, may be relegated to the lumber-room in which the fairy-tales that once served as historical facts are stored.

M. Gendebien's motion of thanks to the French army was carried unanimously, but his proposal about the monument was rejected. In its place the Belgian Chamber voted Marshal Gérard a sword of honour. The debate gave M. Nothomb, who had carried on the work of the Foreign Department under successive Ministers, the opportunity of appraising the exact services rendered by France and England to Belgium. He said :

"I think there is some reason to regret that the National Assembly has not been left to observe the same silence upon the second intervention that it maintained with regard to the first, for this foreign intervention, although justified by special circumstances, was none the less a great misfortune, if only the sentiments of our national honour are considered. Moreover, if each nation has made sacrifices, it has found either a reward or a compensation in the event itself. But as silence has been broken, the absolute rejection of the first part of the motion—viz., the vote of thanks—would, in its turn, be impolitic. As to the proposal to destroy the lion of Waterloo, I absolutely

oppose it, and with all my energy. I regard that monument as the emblem of the deliverance of Europe. The day of Waterloo opened a new era for Europe—the era of representative Governments. That day gave Belgium her independence, which was then distorted, but which has now received a new and its true form from the events of September, 1830. I will not repeat what has been said here about an event which has been so strangely misrepresented. I will add only one word, and that is, if the battle of Waterloo had been won by those who have since come to the aid of our independence, our nationality would have disappeared for a long time, and perhaps this very city in which we now meet, instead of being the capital of a new Kingdom of Belgium, would be once more only the chief town of the Dyle Department. I regret to be compelled to make this reference to a past which is sad for those who are still our guests ; but inconsiderate words have been launched from this tribune. They will make some noise abroad, and we cannot leave them without reply. Neither in England nor in Germany must there be any doubt of our sentiment of independence. I have just pronounced a name upon which I must dwell a little before I sit down. It is asked, What has England done for Belgian independence, for the liberty of the world ? What has she done ? But is contemporary history unknown ? She was the last asylum of liberty when a conqueror held Europe under his iron sway ; she sustained a gigantic struggle to restore this continent to independence. What has she done within the last two years ? She stretched out her powerful arm, first over France, and then over Belgium, and said to the other Powers : ‘ You shall not touch these two Revolutions ’ ; and these Revolutions have remained intact. And what has she done for us in particular ? She, among others, prevented our partition at an epoch it would have been better not to recall, and which must be styled deplorable. The refusal of the Duc de Nemours seemed to render our national independence impossible, and suggestions of partition sprang up. England, more firmly than any other, repelled the proposal which some adopted from inability to see any better solution. What has she done in

the last three months? She has concluded in our interests a striking alliance with France. She broke away from her most cherished traditions. She who received from Holland the King of her Revolution in 1688 has severed herself from Holland in our behalf. That is what England has done in the last three months, and for two years past, and for forty years before."

M. Nothomb's words found a happily phrased corroboration from the lips of King Louis Philippe on the occasion of his receiving, on 17th February, 1833, the delegates of the Belgian Chambers, who brought for presentation to him the official copy of their vote. His Majesty said, in the course of his remarks: "I am happy to tell you that it is to the union of England and France that Belgium owes the great advantage she has just obtained, and Europe a new guarantee for the maintenance of peace."

The capitulation of Antwerp did not end the crisis, and the blockade of the Dutch coast continued. In return, King William kept a tighter hold than ever on the Scheldt, and arrested ships of even neutral Powers. But at the same time the pressure of the embargo enforced by the Anglo-French fleet began to be felt more and more in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, and while the British and French Governments never ceased to hold out the olive-branch, there was always the possibility that they might be driven to adopt extreme remedies, and substitute a declaration of war for the milder coercive measures hitherto employed. The iron will of King William commenced to relax. His own people began to murmur at the decline of commerce, at the detention of 4,000 of their brothers in French fortresses. At this moment, too, Prussia urged pacific views at The Hague. In March, 1833, King William sent a new representative to London—M. Samuel Dedel—and the change was rightly regarded as signifying an intention to negotiate, or at the least to temporise.

On 21st May a new Convention was signed, by which King William engaged not to recommence hostilities against Belgium, and to open the Scheldt to navigation pending the conclusion of a definitive treaty between Belgium and Holland. It was

also agreed that the armistice was to extend to the parts of Limburg and Luxembourg occupied and claimed by Belgium until a final treaty had been signed. In return for these engagements by Holland, France and England raised the blockade, and all the Dutch prisoners were sent back to their country. A Convention of this temporary force was more popular in Belgium at the time than a definite and binding treaty of peace. A treaty, then, could only have enforced the Twenty-four Articles, which signified the immediate and inevitable surrender of the claimed territory. The Convention left the Belgians in possession, and put off for a little time longer the evil day when the provinces would have to be given up. There remained always the hope, so long as evacuation did not take place, that some turn of events might obviate the necessity of making any surrender at all.

While diplomatists were negotiating in London, Belgium had passed through a Parliamentary crisis. The Ministry was composed of men who could take something more than a local view of the situation. They were Belgians, but they could see well enough that Belgium could not expect to have matters all her own way. Unfortunately, the majority of the members were not so reasonable, and it was always difficult for the Ministers to count on their followers. Such an experience befell them in April, 1833, when the Chamber refused to vote supplies for more than a limited period, basing their proceeding on the principle that the territory must be liberated by 1st July, or recourse should be made to force. Ministers protested that it would be both unwise and useless to attempt to force the Powers to accelerate their proceedings, to suit the pleasure of the advanced section of Belgian politicians, but they were outvoted. No other solution could be found than a dissolution of the Chambers and a fresh appeal to the country.

The Convention of London of 21st May was submitted for acceptance to the newly-elected Chamber on its meeting early in June, and, after a stormy debate, received the necessary approbation* of the popular Assembly. The first consequence

* The warmth of the debate may be gathered from the fact that a duel was fought between Charles Rogier and M. Gendebien. The former was wounded.

of the acceptance of the new Convention was the reconstitution of the London Conference, from which the three allied Powers had withdrawn when England and France adopted coercive measures. At the first sitting of the Conference on 15th July the Plenipotentiaries decided that the treaty of the Twenty-four Articles which Belgium had accepted should serve as the basis of a definitive treaty. On learning this decision, King Leopold wrote to his representative in Paris, M. le Hon : " It is now for the Dutch to come out with their proposals, and for us not to accept them if they are onerous, as they will be to a dead certainty." The Dutch proposals were of this character : They claimed both the absolute control of the navigation of the Scheldt and the payment by Belgium of all the arrears of the debt from 1830, which had been assessed at an annual payment of over £700,000. As King Leopold put it : " They make us pay the most considerable tribute, they allow nothing for the heavy expenses we have been put to through Holland's delay in accepting the terms, and then they take away our territory and close the Scheldt to our commerce." He added : " Really, if it were a treaty with negroes on one of the coasts of Africa, men would be ashamed to put forward such unfair pretensions."

When the Dutch Government found that it was not going to have matters entirely its own way, it resorted to its old obstructionist tactics, and the whole question seemed reopened. Lord Palmerston's patience having been sorely tried, he put the question to the Dutch representatives bluntly : " Were they going to conclude a definitive treaty, or were they not ?" The answer was in the negative, and the Conference again suspended its labours. Before doing so it endorsed the statements made in an able note prepared by M. Van de Weyer and General Goblet, setting forth events in their due sequence, and showing conclusively that Holland was alone to blame for the rupture. This note was dated 28th September, 1833. King Leopold wrote a few days later : " I believe all idea of an arrangement with Holland has vanished ; it is regrettable, as what is only provisional is very harmful."

It will be convenient to leave the account of the final stage

of the long-drawn-out effort to attain a definitive settlement between Holland and Belgium for another chapter. Six years were to elapse before this happy result—happy not so much in its terms and details as in its putting an end to what was uncertain and threatening in the relations of the two neighbouring peoples—was arrived at. But it will be necessary to complete this part of Belgium's story before turning to the internal affairs of the new Kingdom.

One sad incident may here be referred to. Although King Leopold often complained of the uncertain help he received from the French Government after the Antwerp expedition, he carried on a most intimate correspondence with his father-in-law in Paris. His relations with his brother-in-law, the Duc d'Orleans, were especially affectionate. In January, 1833, King Leopold and Queen Louise met Louis Philippe at Lille, where Marshal Gérard's force was passed in review by the two monarchs. In the following November, King Leopold and Queen Louise also paid a state visit to Paris.

On 24th July, 1833, a Prince named Leopold was born at Laeken, and as heir to the throne he received the title of Duke of Brabant. This event was hailed with great enthusiasm, as it seemed to insure the existence of the new dynasty, and for a time everything promised well. The young Prince was a strong and healthy baby, and there was no cause for the slightest anxiety. In the spring of 1834, however, the child became ill, and, being unskilfully treated, the case soon proved serious. King Leopold sent, in his distress, to London for an English doctor, but it was too late. Writing on 13th May to one of his Ministers before the blow had fallen, King Leopold said :

“ Dr. Clark, in whom I have the greatest confidence, has been good enough to leave his numerous patients to come here. He found the child so reduced and so weak that it is impossible to answer for the future. The saddest part of it is that he was such a strong, fine child, and that had he been some peasant's son he would probably be fresh and healthy now ; but, thanks to timidity and ignorance, inflammation of the mucous membrane has been allowed to set in. At the beginning of the year

the most ordinary care would have sufficed—now God knows if there be any hope.”

Three days later the young Prince passed away. King Leopold was described by one of his household as “crushed and afflicted to a degree which would touch the hardest heart.” For a brief space the King withdrew from the public gaze, but the position of the country, of his own fortunes, indeed—for nothing was yet consolidated in Belgium—did not allow him to long indulge the most poignant or the most sacred grief. In working for Belgian interests he found the surest antidote for his personal affliction.

CHAPTER XI.

Peace between Belgium and Holland.

THE efforts of Belgium to rid herself of Dutch rule, the efforts of the chief European Powers to compel Holland to admit that her authority had been permanently swept away in Belgium, have so exclusively occupied our attention that it will be best, at the sacrifice of strict chronology, to pursue the same subject to the end, and narrate now the incidents which marked the closing phase in the long controversy.

The written protest of the Belgian Plenipotentiaries, Goblet and Van de Weyer, to the London Conference on 28th September, 1833, marked the close of a distinct period. The King of Holland had bound himself not to attack the Belgians under any circumstances, and to open the Scheldt; the King of the Belgians had also consented to abstain from hostilities, and to leave the communications of the Maestricht garrison free with Germany and Holland. The provisional Convention of May, 1833, left the disputed territory in Belgian hands. One change had taken place. The garrison in the fortress of Luxembourg was no longer Dutch, a Prussian force under General Du Moulin having taken over its charge. The area included with the fortress had also been extended to four leagues round it. The absence of a definitive treaty with the Dutch was consequently not wholly unpleasant to the Belgians, as it left them in possession of almost all the territory they claimed, and put off the day of separation with their kinsmen, as prescribed by the Twenty-four Articles. The only drawback from the Belgian point of view was that it compelled the Government to keep its army in a state of readiness for war, and during the whole of this dubious interval half Belgium's

annual revenue was assigned to military expenditure. King Leopold neglected no means of popularising the army, and with this view he instituted the Iron Cross—a decoration to be bestowed on those Belgians who had been wounded, or who had displayed exceptional bravery in the earlier phases of the struggle for independence from August, 1830, to February, 1831.

The years from 1833 to 1838 were marked by few incidents of any importance in the relations of the two States. In 1835 the Prussian commandant of Luxembourg arrested a Belgian commissioner, named Hanno, who was collecting taxes. M. Hanno was promptly liberated. In 1837 some agents of King William cut timber in the Grunenwald Forest, at which there was a great outcry in Belgium ; but satisfaction was soon given, and the incident closed without serious trouble. The only change of any importance was the stronger interest manifested by Prussia in the Luxembourg settlement, and in 1836 the Prussian Government put forward the view that if Luxembourg were ceded to Belgium, Prussia, and not Holland, would have to be compensated with the part of Limburg that Belgium claimed on the right bank of the Meuse. This pretension did not at all please the Dutch.

There was one other incident of a personal character that claims notice. General Goblet had done excellent work as co-Plenipotentiary in London, and King Leopold had a very high opinion of his ability and tact. When, after some difficulty, Prussia, at the beginning of 1834, agreed to receive a Belgian Minister at Berlin, General Goblet was appointed by his King, and accepted by the Court to which he was nominated. The *Augsburg Gazette* published an article on his appointment, in which it said : “ We cherish the hope that, by the intervention of this statesman, the Germans will stretch forth the hand of friendship to Belgium, that she may not be obliged to give herself up entirely to France, contrary to her own interests, and, as everyone must agree, contrary to the interests of Germany, and consequently of all Europe.” If General Goblet’s appointment gave satisfaction in Germany, it was otherwise at The Hague, where the opportunity was seized of playing him a bad turn.

At the time of the Belgian Revolution in 1830 Goblet was a Captain of Engineers in the Dutch Army quartered at Menin. When he accepted service under the Provisional Government, formalities in his case, as in others, were not taken much into account, and he relied, perhaps too much, on the verbal arrangements he made with the Prince of Orange at Antwerp. The younger son of King William, Prince Frederick, had married the King of Prussia's daughter, while his daughter had married the same monarch's son, Prince Albert of Prussia. These two ladies told the Prussian Foreign Minister that General Goblet was a deserter, and deserved to be shot. The immediate consequence of this representation was that General Goblet was not received at Berlin, and King Leopold cancelled the appointment. It may be mentioned that one of the first acts of the Prince of Orange on coming to the throne in 1840 was to confirm the accuracy of General Goblet's version of the circumstances under which he quitted the Dutch service in 1830, and as a further *amende* the King of Prussia sent him on the same occasion the Order of the Red Eagle. The Goblet incident was an indication of the bitterness that still was felt at The Hague on the subject of Belgium, but happily it proved to be the last revelation of what might be termed petty spite.

Suddenly, and almost without warning, there was a complete change in the diplomatic situation. For some years King William had evaded recognising the accomplished fact in Belgium. For five years he refused to negotiate a definitive treaty with the new neighbour Kingdom formed out of his insurgent Southern Provinces. But events had slowly borne in on his mind that further struggle was useless, that the game was lost, and that, if he remained obdurate much longer, he would very likely have to sacrifice those districts in Luxembourg and Limburg which the Twenty-four Articles assigned him. On 14th March, 1838, accordingly, the Dutch Minister notified the London Conference that King William was willing to accept the Twenty-four Articles, and that he had full powers to negotiate a definitive treaty on the lines of the preliminaries drawn up on 15th November, 1831, and accepted

at the time by Belgium. The London Conference thereupon reassembled to complete its protracted labours.

The announcement of King William's purpose made a tremendous sensation in Belgium, where the long-indulged dream that possession is nine points of the law was thus summarily ended. The Belgians were unanimous in their resolution to spare no effort or sacrifice to preserve all their territory. Even in Luxembourg the people did not abstain from demonstrations meant to prove their desire to remain Belgian, and at Strassen, within the zone of the fortress, the people erected the Belgian tricolour. The Prussian soldiers pulled it down, and the Belgian Foreign Minister, M. de Theux, was constrained to admit in the Chamber that they were within their right.

Confronted with this new and, in a sense, unexpected danger—for the Convention of May, 1833, had left it to be understood that a definitive peace would be attained by direct negotiations between Belgium and Holland, and not by a reference to the Conference—the Belgian Government decided on a definite diplomatic campaign. It was its turn to procrastinate and to raise delays until it could see what was the best course to pursue, and how the different Powers intended to act. The Belgian Chambers passed resolutions to the effect that the integrity of the territory should be maintained.

There was no lack of plausible arguments to support the Belgian case. The terms of the Twenty-four Articles, which were a deviation in favour of Holland from those of the Eighteen Articles, upon which basis King Leopold had originally mounted the throne, were such as required prompt acceptance. Belgium had accepted at once, despite the shock to her feelings and interests. Holland had waited seven years before acceding. Was it fair or just to enforce the letter of this old agreement without making any allowance for the changes which time and the course of events had effected? Then there was the distinct stipulation of the Convention of May, 1833, that the definitive treaty should be negotiated between Belgium and Holland themselves. These arguments—and there were others—sufficed to show that the Belgian case was not hopeless

if it came to negotiation, but that was what the friends of Holland were determined should not take place. The three Northern Powers supported King William's acquiescence in the terms of the Twenty-four Articles, with the declaration that they expected the territorial definitions set forth therein to be scrupulously observed.

A new factor had been introduced into the problem, or, more correctly speaking, an old factor had acquired fresh and unexpected importance. In the earlier stages of the question Belgium had to reckon only with the obstinacy and pride of the Dutch King. In 1838 the real peril came from the designs of Prussia. In June of that year King Leopold said to the delegates from the districts in dispute: "If Belgium had to treat with Holland alone there can be hardly any doubt that an arrangement would be arrived at to the great advantage of the two countries; but we have to reckon with the Northern Powers. The situation is complicated more especially by the relations with the Germanic Confederation. It is undeniable that the country will have to struggle with many political passions across the Rhine. It is to our interest to do nothing to irritate them."

The attitude of the Northern Powers, who had been privy to King William's intention before it was carried into effect, was based on the assumption that the mere acceptance by King William of the Twenty-four Articles ended the matter, and that all the Conference had then to do was to require Belgium to conform with their terms. This was a little too much for the complacency of France and England, who refused their assent to so summary a procedure. The question of the debt was very cleverly raised by the Belgian Government, and both England and France supported it on this point. The financial department at Brussels had no difficulty in proving that the debt fixed by the Articles at an annual payment of 8,400,000 florins should not be a third of that sum. The Conference was so far impressed that it consented to reduce the total to 5,400,000 florins, a considerable reduction, but most important from the Belgian point of view, because it introduced the principle that the terms of the Articles were, after all, sus-

ceptible of modification. If they could be modified for the indemnity, why not for the territory?

The negotiations had produced no definite result when the Belgian Chambers opened their session on 13th November, 1838. In his speech the King said: "Our differences with Holland are not yet arranged. The rights and interest of the country are the sole rule of my policy. They have been treated with the care demanded by their importance. They shall be defended with courage and perseverance." The King's words made a great sensation, and were re-echoed in the address of reply: "Our rights," said the Belgian Deputies, "are those that every nation must claim—its union and the integrity of its territory. They rest on that ancient nationality which the Belgian people only reconquered in 1830. The *immediate execution*, which was one of the essential conditions of the treaty of 1831, and which alone placed Belgium in the hard position of admitting the necessity of seeing her territory mutilated, not having taken place by the act of Holland, as well as by the tolerance of the mediating Powers, things are no longer intact in this matter. Moreover, time has so strengthened the ties between us and our fellow-countrymen of Limburg and Luxembourg, and rendered them so intimate that they could not now be severed without violating all that is most sacred in the rights of man. If in the definitive treaty now to be drafted pecuniary sacrifices of an equitable nature had to be made independently of our legitimate share in the debt of the Netherlands, we should be ready to accept them. We feel sure that the Powers will see the justice of our cause. France in particular will not refuse Belgium her aid." }

Unfortunately for Belgium, this assumption was not sound. France was not disposed to fight on Belgium's behalf for the retention of the additional territory. On this occasion it was clear that France's intervention would be followed by that of Prussia, and a general war would have been the consequence. Already a considerable Prussian army was collected on the frontier, and there were rumours of further preparations, such as the calling out of the reserves. France, therefore, decided to go with the other Powers in considering the territorial



M. SYLVAIN VAN DE WEYER.



question to be regulated by the treaty, and that Belgium was bound by her formal acceptance at the time, notwithstanding Holland's own delay in doing so. King Leopold was thus placed in an embarrassing position. His wishes and sympathies were entirely with the Belgians, and he had never for a moment relaxed his military preparations, so that he had 110,000 troops ready to take the field as against 60,000 in Holland. But it was impossible for him to act in defiance of the views of France, which were expressed to him both officially and by King Louis Philippe as well in his private letters. The following extracts from some of the latter correspondence clearly reveal the opinions held in Paris at the time :

8th December, 1838.

I really must tell you that the lamentable addresses of your Chambers, the support and votes given them by your Ministers, and the armaments with which all this is accompanied, have brought the crisis to the pitch of violence. I always thought that there was only the fixing of the debt in which we could hope to be at all successful, because justice was on our side, whilst it was clearly against us in the territorial question. What was more, I at first thought it of real interest, and then as impossible to sustain by argument as by force of arms. . . . I even believe that we are fortunate to have obtained beforehand a reduction of the debt and the quittance of arrears, for however just both may have been it was contrary to the letter of the treaty. Under any circumstances the business must be dealt with as it is, and it has arrived at a point as troublesome for me as it is serious for you.

Again, in a letter written a few days later—11th December—the King of the French wrote : “ I am infinitely obliged to you for communicating to me Lord Palmerston's letter. I must repeat that I see the matter exactly as he does, and, according to my convictions, the counsels he gives you are the only ones you could reasonably follow. . . . In my opinion, by following the counsels Lord Palmerston gives you, not only would you do nothing contrary to the interests of Belgium, but I really think that it is only by following the course he indicates that you can avoid compromising them gravely. Time presses . . . the vagueness you maintain in this respect cannot be prolonged further.”

Finally, on 18th of the same month, Louis Philippe wrote :

“ I declare to you that I am very much disquieted, and, above all, profoundly grieved to see that my warnings and

counsels have not produced more effect. . . . I think it my duty to have the Protocol signed, and I therefore warn you afresh that it will be so. Meanwhile we will oppose immediate signature ; we still take breathing-space, which, though very short, leaves you a little time for reflecting definitely on what you are going to do, and for looking about you and making the real state of the case fully comprehended. I have never concealed from you that I regarded the territorial clauses as binding on me and you and your Chambers."

These extracts from the private correspondence of the two Kings show that France would, and could, not support the Belgians in their territorial demand. If France would not, then England could not, although, despite the advice he gave King Leopold to yield, Lord Palmerston was far more sympathetic to the Belgian view than his own colleagues or the French Government. While there were doubts and differences among Belgium's friends, there were none on the other side. The Conference, therefore, formulated unanimous decisions. In a Protocol of 6th December, 1838, the Powers insisted on the territorial extent of Belgium being left as defined in the Twenty-four Articles. With regard to the debt, it reduced Belgium's share to 5,000,000 florins a year, and acquitted her of all arrears up to 1st January, 1839. Belgium was allowed a few weeks to give in her adhesion.

At this desperate moment there remained only one chance. The Belgian Government decided to offer to buy up the territory they clung to as part of their national integrity. M. de Gerlache, who had been President of the Congress, was joined with M. Van de Weyer as Special Commissioners to present Lord Palmerston a note offering to pay 60,000,000 francs to Holland for the districts claimed. The same offer was made by King Leopold through Queen Louise to King Louis Philippe. It was not concealed that, if necessary, Belgium would pay up to 100,000,000 francs. Louis Philippe refused to support the proposal, alleging that it was useless. Lord Palmerston brought it to the knowledge of the Conference, which declined even to consider it. The Powers refused to go into the matter of the territory at all. On 23rd January, 1839, all the Powers having

signed the final Protocol, King Leopold was invited by the Conference to give his adhesion to the Treaty with as little delay as possible. On 4th February, King William accepted it, and there was no longer any good reason for hoping that the inevitable might be averted.

Even at this eleventh hour the Belgian Plenipotentiary made a still further proposal. "If you will not let us buy this territory, will you let us arrange with the Germanic Confederation to leave us the civil administration, whilst it retains the military and political so far as external politics are concerned?" This proposal also was rejected. It ruffled the temper of the French Plenipotentiary, General Sebastiani, who had been appointed on Talleyrand's death, and it did not attract the sympathy of the German. The real truth was that the Powers wished to finish the matter. If they sanctioned the slightest change at the last moment the whole question might be reopened, and no one could tell what further changes might not be claimed from other quarters. An end to the business was the thing most desired and most desirable.

The delivery of this ultimatum missed nothing of its effect from the surrounding circumstances. Among the Belgian people the excitement mounted to fever-heat, several of the Ministers resigned, and the Chambers adjourned for a month, while Austria and Prussia recalled their Ministers from Brussels, alleging as a grievance the employment by Belgium of the Polish General Skrzynecki, the hero of Ostrolenka. Russia not yet having appointed a Minister at Brussels, found satisfaction in the proceedings of her allies. Such was the state of confusion that only three members remained in the Ministry—MM. de Theux, Nothomb, and Willmar.

On 19th February, M. de Theux proposed to the Chamber that it should give its sanction for the King's signing the treaty. A second proposition related to the concessions to be made to natives of the ceded districts who opted to settle in Belgium. The Bill was submitted to a committee to report upon. By this means time was gained, and with it a calmer view began to prevail. For the frenzy of national passion and indignation came to be substituted the calmer mood of resigna-

tion before the inevitable. The report of the committee furnished the proof of this. Its salient passages read :

“ However jealous we may be of the national honour, we have not thought that it would be to forfeit it not to commit Belgium to the inevitable results of an unequal struggle. No man is dishonoured for yielding to superior force, and the honour of a people is the same. Neither our contemporaries nor history will be so unjust as to say that Belgium, abandoned by all her allies, contesting measures in which even those on whose sympathy she thought she could count took part, was dishonoured by resigning herself to a treaty imposed upon her by irresistible force. Take care, then, all of you who love our nationality, who value our civil and religious liberties consecrated in our constitution, of incurring the risks of a general war, which would perhaps be aimed at the destruction of our independence, and which in its results might lead either to the restoration of Dutch rule or to our conversion into a French department.”

The discussion of the report began on 4th March, and ended ten days later. So far as demonstrations went, the opinion both in and outside the Chamber was hostile to acceptance. The Ministers who had resigned were exceedingly bitter against those who had not resigned. M. Gendebien stood forward as the leader of those who would defy Europe at all costs. For him in a special sense the last stage had come. He was making his last throw to be the dictator of Belgium's destiny. His extraordinary egotism was revealed in his peroration. He was discussing the fate of a nation, but he sought to impress his audience and to win votes by coupling with it his own : “ If I am unable to prevent your condemning our fellow-countrymen, I can at least share their fate. Our condemnation shall be equal. The instant you shall pronounce your decision to that effect I condemn myself to political ostracism.”

If the emotional politicians were against the treaty, the men of common sense saw the danger, and, fortunately for Belgium, their influence prevailed. M. Devaux declared : “ Ten years at least of consolidation and complete tranquillity are needed for

Belgium to fix her roots firmly in the soil of Europe, and attain a position from which she could confront future storms with confidence. For us the problem is to reach the stage of consolidation." M. Lebeau spoke in the same sense. M. Rogier raised a new vista in descanting on the possible benefits of the assured peace which would follow from the acceptance of the Treaty: "Peace is not, from my point of view, repose; it is not immobility, inertia, sleep. A finer part, a more useful rôle, belongs to it. Peace is the fruitful source of all intellectual activity, of all material activity. Peace is the progressive perfecting of our institutions, the development of our nationality, of our industrial forces under energetic, skilful, and prescient direction."

Certainly, when it came even to rhetoric, M. Gendebien did not have matters all his own way. M. Nothomb concluded the debate: "Belgium is not humiliated or dishonoured; she has done all that she could do. Having done all that she could, she has done all that she ought to do. To ask more than this is to be unjust to her. It is on the two Great Powers who have abandoned Belgium that the odium must fall for the act which closes our Revolution. It is from France and England that history will demand an account."

On 19th March, 1839, the debate ended. In a practically full house—one member being ill and one seat vacant—the voting came out: 58 votes for the treaty, and 42 against. M. Gendebien, in giving a negative vote, exclaimed: "No! three hundred and eighty thousand times no, for the three hundred and eighty thousand Belgians you are sacrificing to fear!" On hearing the result of the vote he at once retired, wrote out his letter of resignation, and quitted the precincts of the Chamber. The Senate also sanctioned the treaty on 26th March, by 31 votes to 14.

The same sentiments animated the Upper Chamber to those in the Lower. It was a case of yielding to necessity and superior power. One Senator declared: "If only one of our allies had supported us we would never have given way."

The final scene took place in London on 18th April, when M. Van de Weyer appended his signature as Belgian Plenipo-

tentiary to the three treaties, embodying the Twenty-four Articles, with the modifications agreed upon as to the debt. These treaties were those between Belgium and the five Powers grouped under the London Conference, between Belgium and Holland, and between Belgium and the Germanic Confederation. Before appending his signature M. Van de Weyer addressed the Conference: "His Majesty my royal master owed a last effort to the populations which have shown so much devotion and affection, and if he consents to abandon them it is less because of the dangers which threatened the whole of Belgium than in consideration of the evils which must burst upon Limburg and Luxembourg. Never did His Majesty more painfully feel all the extent of the task he has undertaken in the interests of general peace, and for the sake of establishing a nationality which had become a necessity of European policy; he will feel some consolation in the idea that this nationality and this peace are henceforth beyond the reach of any attack."

Belgium lost the territory she had held for nine years, and clung to so staunchly. But she had not been dismissed altogether empty-handed. By the withdrawal of the claim for arrears she was relieved from a liability of over seven millions sterling, and by the reduction in the total she saved over a quarter of a million per annum. In this matter King Leopold's service to Belgium was perhaps more materially useful than if he had gained her a strip of territory here and there. Writing on this subject to his Finance Minister in 1855, King Leopold put the case with his habitual clearness:

"In 1839 I saved the country the arrears of the debt. It was considered, and the Duc de Broglie maintained to me that whatever might be the modification in respect of the debt, what had been due *before this modification* ought to be paid. Ten years at 8,500,000 florins (about £726,040) make 85,000,000 florins (about £7,260,400). The debt was reduced only by my will, by my determination not to consent to the debt which the treaty of 15th November, 1831, had established. The capital in fifteen years is 45,000,000 florins (about £3,843,000). Not counting that there would have to be paid annually at this

present time 3,000,000 florins (about £256,200) more. I have the documents which prove that it is so. It is indispensable to tell the country this sort of thing from time to time. The private interests of individuals cause this sort of thing—tolerably important, however—to get clean wiped out of people's memories."

Thus, after nine years' turmoil, discussion, and refusal to hold neighbourly relations, the great and only personal quarrel that ever occurred between Holland and Belgium came to an end. We have traced its slow growth, and related in their order the principal events that marked the development of the problem from incompatibility of views to revolution, from open strife to a formal peace under the ægis of Europe. After all, the quarrel was not so very bitter, the wounds inflicted were not so very deep, the rancour left behind soon disappeared. Much of the bitterness of the quarrel, while it lasted, was due to the personal pride of King William, who was equally conscious of his good intentions and of the dignity of his sovereign position. To question the benevolence of his designs or the wisdom of his measures was a grave offence on the part of those whom he regarded as his subjects. He knew far better what they wanted than they did themselves, and his convictions were held all the more strongly because he had the inner consciousness of an upright mind and a desire to do good. Unfortunately for himself and for the solution of the question which in its earlier stages depended exclusively on his views and will, he had no Belgian among his Ministers to advise him. Nor among his Dutch advisers was there one who dared to present things in a different light from his own, or to suggest that what was good at The Hague and Amsterdam might not be wise, or even safe, in Brussels. King William was an autocrat, his Ministers were the slaves of his royal will, and thus a problem which in its early stages would have been easily solved by some concessions and a little mutual forbearance developed into one that entailed an appeal to the sword and the dissolution of a kingdom.

The retrospect from the Belgian point of view brings out some different aspects of the quarrel. If on the Dutch side the dominant cause of the strife was the personal sentiment of the

monarch rather than any racial antipathy or popular resentment, the sentiment of the people, a sense of injury among an intelligent and progressive community, counted for most in the agitation of the Belgians, who at last broke out in rebellion. The union of the Netherlands was supposed to be on a basis of equality between the races thus joined together. If they were not to be equals the union could not endure. Unfortunately for its stability, no account was taken of the Belgian wishes in 1814-15. They had no one to speak for them in Vienna and Paris. Their consent was taken for granted. If they were not absolutely forced into the union with Holland, it was one of those arrangements between nations which may be likened to a marriage of convenience. The parties are for some obvious reasons not well matched, but if trials do not come, if no crisis arises, the bond may endure without snapping. When the reverse happens disunion follows inevitably, and the severance brings relief.

The Belgians were true and devout Catholics to the core ; the Dutch represented one of the severest shades of Protestantism. The Belgians had no royal line, no national dynasty, to be loyal to, for the old sentiment of attachment towards the House of Burgundy had waned under the Hapsburgs until in the critical period of 1830 it might be regarded as extinct. Consequently they had no national leader, no recognised spokesman, to show them what to do, to tell the assembled nations what they wanted, and to lead them on to achieve their destiny. The Dutch possessed a ruling family whose name alone sufficed to raise glorious memories of their independence, their power, and their triumphs over land and sea. At the name of Orange the heart of every Netherlander of the United Provinces, which we call Holland, swelled with pride. But to the Belgians the name of Orange signified nothing at all in the first phase, and when it became better known in the second phase it must be recorded that it was synonymous with tyranny.

The Dutch, then, possessed all the emblems of a nation, independence from of old, a sense of sovereign power, the royal House whose name embodied the glories of the country.

The Belgians had none of these. Yet he would be a shallow and an ignorant student of history who would pronounce them in any way the inferior. They, too, had their glorious epochs in arms, in arts, in commerce, although no Belgian King had ruled from Brussels. Their laurels had been won under foreign masters, their patriotism had lain dormant under a régime which was a curious survival of feudal ties, but the independence and robustness of their national spirit had endured all the time. European diplomacy knew them not, but those who had to deal with them knew them as the people who had to be governed by their charters and the constitutions, which made them the most free of men on the Continent of Europe. As the Austrian rulers used to say, "Our Belgic provinces give us our best soldiers," and in Napoleon's armies the reputation was sustained. General Thiébaut wrote in his *Memoirs*, comparing French and Belgian soldiers: "The Belgian has something in his character that we lack; in other words, he makes one of the best soldiers in the world."

Now if Europe in 1815 did not know these things, if the great statesmen at the Vienna Congress, to tell the plain truth, did not trouble their heads about Belgian views and opinions for one moment, it must not be supposed that the Belgians had any doubt about their own worth and merits. They were free men by instinct and tradition; they had their rights and their ideals, and they were conscious of their capacity and their national dignity among the oldest communities of Europe. They had not forgotten for a moment their glorious participation in the Crusades when they had given Kings to Jerusalem and Emperors to Constantinople. They had not forgotten the splendid days of Bruges and Ghent, and the achievements of the Artevelde. A people nursed in such memories could not long remain asleep. They needed but the spur of injustice, the lash of tyranny, to spring to life and action. The Dutch rule supplied the impulse.

King William did not understand the new subjects with whom a fatigued Europe provided him. He thought he was doing them a great favour by consenting to take them under his charge. He had all kinds of benevolent plans for them, but

they were to accept them humbly and gratefully. If the Belgians did not like them, if the schemes did not even suit them, the Belgians were still to obey, and to think that their new King, just as much a foreigner, by the way, as the Emperor Napoleon was, knew better than they did what was good for them. His schemes, too, were based on Dutch predominance. The Dutch were to have all the sweets of power. Belgium was to be ruled, not by and for the Belgians, but by and for the Dutch. King William was only half conscious of what he was doing. He was applying his system, which did excellently well in Holland; how could he be expected to modify it for the Southern Provinces? The rigidity of Dutch rule did not admit of modifications. Its excellence in the eyes of its authors and framers led them to insist on uniformity. And in his pursuit of uniformity on the basis of the supposed superexcellence of his system—the Fundamental Law and its codicils—King William got his ship of State among the breakers.

Long before Belgian discontent broke out in acts of hostility to his Government he had warning of what was coming, and had he been so minded he might have averted all serious trouble by a little timely concession, and by the display of some common sense. Even after the first rioting and the seizure of Brussels by its citizens a compromise could have been arranged that would have left the Prince of Orange in authority over Belgium. But opportunity after opportunity was thrown away, and the Revolution followed. The Belgians, unaided, expelled the Dutch from their country with the exception of three fortified places. Then the Powers intervened. The London Conference provides a curious and instructive object-lesson as to the limitations to the authority of an international conclave, and the lesson is not the less instructive because it was a case of Great Powers dealing with small. Half its Protocols were superseded or ignored. It withdrew its decisions at one moment in favour of Holland, at the next in favour of Belgium. It showed itself incapable of employing the word "must," and seeing that both parties promptly and absolutely conformed to its orders. When two of the Powers employed force, the three others stood aside. When

one of the two Powers achieved a definite and decisive success, it was in such a hurry to prove its disinterestedness to its ally that it quitted the scene, leaving the joint work half done. The London Conference has been cited as a proof of the concord of Europe ; no one who reads its sixty-three Protocols from end to end will find in its record proof of anything but the discord, the latent strife, the keen rivalry of the five Powers who then constituted Europe.

The Conference that nominally dealt with the fate of Belgium was concerned least of all with its interests. It wanted to avert a general war, to maintain the balance of power, to prevent Belgium falling to France, and to save Holland from being too much weakened. It attained its ends in its own way by sheer good luck. If the Belgians had not displayed culpable neglect and want of foresight in their military preparations between the suspension of hostilities in November, 1830, and the Dutch invasion of August, 1831, they would have rolled back the Prince of Orange's army without any difficulty, and achieved their own independence on the basis of the Eighteen Articles. But the neglect to provide the efficient fighting force which is the only guarantee of a people's safety entailed humiliation and loss. After Louvain far less heed was paid to Belgium's pretensions than before, and but for King Leopold the future of Belgium as an independent State would have been compromised.

If the events of August, 1831, imperilled all that the Belgians by their own efforts had achieved, they brought prominently before Europe the individuality of their new King. Everyone saw that he was in no way responsible or to blame for the reverses that the Belgians had experienced in the field. A certain amount of public sympathy could not but be extended to a ruler who received so rude a welcome to his new throne within a fortnight of his coronation. But much more than sympathy was aroused. A sentiment of admiration spread throughout Europe for the Prince who had displayed so much courage, fortitude, and capacity under troubles to which he had in no sense contributed. It was then remembered that in a sense he was the delegate of the Powers. He had accepted the

Belgian throne on the specific assurances of the Conference. The confident assertion of the Russian Plenipotentiary on the eve of King Leopold's departure for Belgium, that King William would be compelled to recognise the Eighteen Articles, had been proved mere froth. The Dutch ruler had snapped his fingers in the faces of the Powers, and invaded Belgium. For this he was never punished, and even benefited by the substitution of the Twenty-four Articles for the earlier draft treaty. But at the same time a new interest had been imported into the question. The Governments felt that King Leopold had established a personal claim to be maintained on the throne, of which he had proved by deeds that he would be a worthy occupant. Lord Palmerston was especially influenced by this consideration. King Louis Philippe was naturally deeply concerned in the fortunes and success of his son-in-law. Belgium, at the moment when her military misfortune brought some obloquy upon her, found a new buckler in the personal influence and high reputation of King Leopold.

The position of King Leopold was one of extraordinary difficulty in his relations with Europe, and also in those with his new subjects. Of the two tasks, that of reconciling the pretensions of the extreme section of Belgian Nationalists with common sense and the practical was the more difficult. To a great extent, too, he was in sympathy with them in their objects, if not in their methods. He would have liked to rule the greater Belgium, and to have counted as many subjects as possible. He would have liked to have wiped out the memory of 1831 by showing in the field what Belgian soldiers under his leading could do. But at the same time he was not a man to risk losing the whole for the sake of the minor parts. In struggling for the concession to Belgium of all she claimed, he displayed patience, persistence, and inexhaustible resource. He was firm and obstinate at one stage, just as he was temporising at another. After the conclusion of the provisional Convention of May, 1833, he most carefully refrained from raising the question of a definitive treaty in the hope that the territorial principle of *uti possidetis* might with the lapse of time become practical ownership. He refrained, although the con-

clusion of a definitive treaty would have been advantageous to him personally by insuring his general recognition as a ruling Sovereign. It is probable that, had the delay been prolonged some years longer, the result would have confirmed his views and realised the wishes of the Belgian people. But in the year 1838 King William became alive to the fact that he was being outgeneralled by a more astute political intellect. Then he called out for the final definitive treaty which he had throughout refused.

The definitive treaty was the re-enactment of the Twenty-four Articles based on the creation of the smaller Belgium. King Leopold struggled hard to preserve the territory and the subjects over whom he had ruled for eight years. He made proposal after proposal to attain his object, and if he failed it was not his fault. Neither his arguments nor his entreaties could move Louis Philippe to support him on the territorial question, for support of Belgium meant war with the German Powers. Having done all that could be done, only a madman would have taken the one course left of defying Europe, and rushing blindly to destruction. King Leopold adopted the wise course. Availing himself of such assistance as was not withheld from him on the debt question, he obtained the remission of claims which represented a capital sum of not less than ten millions sterling. It was a practical solace for the cessions in Limburg and Luxembourg to which only the most unreasonable of Belgians could affect to be indifferent.

It is not claiming too much for King Leopold to say that in the difficult times which followed the capitulation of Louvain he saved Belgium from losing the hard-earned fruits of the Revolution of 1830; and that when at last, in April, 1839, he was compelled to sign the definitive treaty, which established peace between Belgium and Holland, he obtained the best possible terms. In conclusion, recognition must be given to the ability, tact, and energy displayed by the representatives of Belgium abroad, by M. Van de Weyer and General Goblet in London, M. le Hon in Paris, who loyally carried out and seconded the King's policy, and also to the devotion and courage with which M. Lebeau and M. Nothomb, at the cost of un-

popularity and in the face of personal detraction, upheld the views of common sense and sound policy against the ravings of Chauvinists, who had lost all sense of the true proportion of things, in the Chamber. To these five men, acting under the vigilant and discreet direction of King Leopold, Belgium was mainly indebted for steering the Belgian ship of State safely through the diplomatic shoals and shallows of the nine years during which the London Conference may be said to have existed.

CHAPTER XII.

The Unionist Régime.

A BELGIAN orator said during one of the political crises of the country: "Exaltation is an excellent frame of mind to make a Revolution, but moderation alone assures its fruits and heals its wounds." It may be claimed by the Belgians that it was their moderation which mainly contributed to the durability of the national administration that replaced Dutch rule. The expulsion of the Dutch was brought about by the union of all parties. Catholics and Liberals, the devout and the freethinker, buried their differences and joined hands in one patriotic task. Until the country had been made free and secure party questions and party passions were laid aside, and the Ministries were formed impartially of men of all opinions. That was the state of things King Leopold found on his arrival.

The absence of party strife was a very great advantage, seeing that everything had to be constituted anew in Belgium, and King Leopold became a strong upholder of the Unionist régime, and did everything in his power to prolong its existence. During the first fifteen years of Belgium's separate existence the Ministers were chosen irrespective of party. This epoch stands apart and distinct from everything that has happened in Belgium since 1846.

During a political interregnum of this character it often happens that measures of real benefit to everybody are passed into law. The community benefits by the suppression of those party cries which are intended, if not to mislead, at least to give exaggerated importance to the favourite dogma or doctrine of the hour. So it happened in Belgium. A quan-

tity of really useful work was accomplished during the first years of the new reign, despite what might be considered the engrossing nature of the dispute with Holland. Prominent among these was the introduction of railways—the first to be constructed on the Continent of Europe.

A few days after arriving in Belgium, King Leopold gave orders that the question of the introduction of railways should be carefully considered and reported upon. The engineers, MM. Simons and De Ridder, after three years' examination of the question, reported in favour of making Malines the central point of the Belgian railway system, and proposed that from it should extend main lines in the direction of the four cardinal points. This main system was to be worked and managed by the State. The Ministry of M. Lebeau was then in office, and on 28th March, 1834, it obtained the sanction of the Chamber to execute the project on the lines of the report of the experts. M. Rogier, in pressing the matter on the favourable attention of the legislative body, said, in the course of his remarks: "Glory to the nation which, three years after its birth, and having passed through adversity, is able to show itself the equal of the strongest and the most ancient; which, chained and mutilated, alas! in two parts, is still able to reform itself, and to extract from its own forces the germs of new life and glory! It is by such signs that the true greatness of a people may be seen. It is by such struggles that painful defeats are forgotten, by such victories that old triumphs are equalled and justified."

The work, once sanctioned, was put rapidly in hand. Twelve months after King Leopold signed the decree the official opening of the first railway from Malines to Brussels (5th May, 1835) was celebrated with official ceremonies and popular rejoicings. In the following years railways were constructed to Liège on one side and Ostend on the other, while the line from Malines to Brussels was extended to Charleroi and the French frontier for connection with the French line to Paris. Another matter in the sphere of industry claims notice. An Englishman named Cockerill had in the time of the Dutch Government founded at Seraing, near Liège, an

ironworks and mining company. King William had been himself a partner in the concern, providing half the capital. In 1831 Cockerill bought out King William, introducing Belgian capitalists in his place. The Cockerill Company, which became wholly Belgian in later years, ranks with the firms of Armstrong and Krupp at the present time. The importance of the Cockerill establishment progressed with the industrial and mining activity of Belgium.

The third Ministry of the King, under the direction of M. de Theux, came into office in August, 1834, and remained in power, with individual changes, until April, 1840. The programme of this Ministry was essentially moderate and modest. It was based on the assumption that Belgium had most need of rest and quiet to consolidate her position and give her time, as it were, to look round. But there was one subject that could not be ignored, or even adjourned, for upon it very much depended the progress of the country. A scheme of national education had to be improvised. M. Rogier, in the preceding Ministry, had drafted a comprehensive scheme for dealing with the three grades of education—primary, secondary, and higher. When his successors in office took it up they decided to deal in the first place with the higher alone. This question could no longer be adjourned in consequence of occurrences beyond the rôle of the Government.

On 4th November, 1834, the Catholic hierarchy, led by the Belgian Primate, the Archbishop of Malines, founded in that city a new Catholic University. The three existing Universities left by the Dutch at Louvain, Ghent, and Liège were non-Catholic, and subject to the State. As the Belgian Constitution proclaimed the equality of cults, it followed that no State University could meet the requirements or satisfy the spiritual aspirations of the Church of Rome. It was essential and natural that the Catholics should have their own University, and therefore the founding of the new institution at Malines was perfectly legitimate and politic. But this step stirred up the Liberals. They were not going, they declared, to let the Catholics do something without showing that they could also do the same thing themselves. If the

Catholics established a University at Malines, the Liberals would have one for themselves, proudly dubbed "Free," at Brussels. On 20th November, M. Verhaegen, Burgomaster Rouppe, and others, founded their institution in the capital.

These independent and separate measures compelled the Government to disclose its own policy, for it was clear, among other things, that Belgium could not support five Universities. In 1835 the Government therefore brought in its new measure, which became law on 27th September, 1835. It suppressed the University of Louvain, which King William had founded in 1816, and reorganised those at Ghent and Liége. Shortly after the suppression of Louvain the Catholic University was removed from Malines to that city, where it has remained ever since, reviving the famous traditions of Louvain in the Middle Ages as a seat of learning. The two State Universities established by this law and the two non-endowed Universities founded by the private munificence of Belgian citizens of the opposite political parties still constitute the highest form of education in the country.

Besides dealing with the question of higher education in a satisfactory manner, the Ministry of M. de Theux effected by two measures passed into law in the session of 1836 the complete organisation of the administrative system of the country into communes and cantons. The Constitution had not gone further into the matter than to divide the Kingdom into its historic nine provinces. These were now subdivided into 2,623 communes and 222 judicial cantons, each having a *juge de paix*.

The commune is the pivot of civil life throughout Belgium. It has been said that the Belgian is prouder of his commune than his country, but this is one of those exaggerations which, from being made with a certain assurance, catch the general fancy and pass current as truths. King Leopold, in one of his private letters, put the matter with far greater justice :

"What is wanted for this country is a more robust national feeling, which *exists amongst the people*, but is feeble and fragmentary amongst the higher classes. A large proportion of what remains to us of the nobility is very patriotic." The

commune focusses for the Belgian his love of his country, and provides him with the vent for displaying his national sentiment. But this implies no want of patriotism.

While the debates regarding the Universities in the sessions of 1835-6 brought to the surface something of the latent incompatibility between the two political schools, the Unionist party kept well enough together in support of the Ministry for the transaction of current business as long as the question with Holland remained unsettled. But the acceptance of the treaty in 1839, and the assured peace that came with it, closed the episode. The imperative necessity that had silenced the voice of faction, that had maintained a truce of parties, was removed, and it was inevitable that the different opinions and voices in the community should resume their right to claim unfettered expression. The time was bound to arrive when the Unionist alliance would dissolve. But it was not to be foreseen that the day of its dissolution would be hastened by the discussions that took place over the Dutch treaty. M. de Theux carried the treaty through the Chambers, but the effort weakened his influence and lowered the reputation of his Government by associating it with an unpopular measure.

There were larger issues involved, but the Ministry fell on a comparatively trifling matter. In 1831 Colonel Van der Smissen, involved in the Orange plot, fled from Antwerp. With that easy tolerance of sedition and treachery that characterised the action of the Belgian authorities throughout the Revolution, Colonel Van der Smissen was allowed, in 1839, to return to Belgium, and was placed on the retired list of the army, with the pension of his rank. The Ministry justified its action by Article 20 of the treaty, which stipulated that no one was to suffer for his participation in the recent political events. The Chamber resented this officer's quasi-rehabilitation, and Ministers making the matter a question of confidence, the issue at once became decisive. Beaten in two divisions of the Chamber, M. de Theux resigned in April, 1840.

The new Ministry formed by M. Lebeau was composed exclusively of Liberals, including Rogier, who was again en-

trusted with the portfolios of Works and Education, although it enjoyed the support more or less of all parties. The Catholics were dissatisfied, but their dissatisfaction took no more pronounced form than grumbling. The political crisis looming ahead was also put off a little longer by the sudden cloud that fell upon the peace of Europe through the revival of the Eastern question, and by the internal trouble caused by the final Orange plot, to both of which subjects we must recur.

But these extraneous circumstances could not obscure the fact that there was much discontent in political circles, and that the Unionism of the preceding years was more than half dead. A hostile vote in the Senate entailed the resignation of the Ministry, and the King, rejecting the proposals for a General Election, entrusted M. Nothomb with the difficult task of improvising a new Cabinet. This Ministry came into office on 13th April, 1841, after the Parliamentary session had closed, and as it was more mixed in the opinions of its members than its predecessor, it had a better chance of drawing support from both sides. It made some concessions to the Catholics, and then took up the important question of primary education.

If M. Nothomb had never done anything but attach his name to the organic Law of Primary Education he would have achieved enough to preserve his name among Belgian statesmen. At the moment of the inception of the measure it seemed absolutely impossible to devise any arrangement that would be in the slightest degree acceptable to both parties. M. Nothomb, steering clear of party views, based his law on the public interest, and after a debate that occupied seventeen sittings, he secured the rare triumph of bringing the Chamber entirely round to his opinion. His measure, after being received with scepticism and signs of hostility at the initial stage, was carried in the Chamber by 75 votes to 3, and in the Senate by a unanimous vote.

The law of 23rd September, 1842, on primary education is still the binding force in Belgium on this matter. In its essence it was far ahead of any system of education in Europe outside Germany. Education was to be compulsory, free where necessary, and yet the different cults were to be able to

control the religious teaching of their followers. A Liberal paid the highest tribute to the influence of religion—and it must be remembered that in Belgium religion means exclusively the Church of Rome—on education when he said : “ I am full of respect for a religion to which its most pronounced enemies must at least accord the merit of being still the surest basis of morality among the people, without which morality all progress becomes a poison.” The application of that principle is universal. Morality is essential to progress, and religion, whether it be Christian or Oriental, provides the only means of its attainment. It is a permanent claim to recognition that the Belgian Primary Law, while making education free and comprehensive, studied the religious side of human development, and conciliated the views of rival factions.

To recite the obligations of the law, it may be mentioned that it enforced on each commune the maintenance of at least one free school, where primary education should be imparted gratuitously to the poor, and for a moderate fee to those able to pay. The Government and the Provincial Administrations were to add by special grants to the resources of the commune when inadequate. The law also provided for the institution of normal schools, where the teachers of the primary schools might be trained, and, finally, for the control of the institutions by State inspectors. The prestige of passing the Education Bill kept the Nothomb Ministry alive during the session of 1842-3, and in April, 1843, it was strengthened by the addition of General Goblet as Foreign Minister. Other changes were made in the composition of the Cabinet which, if anything, seemed to add to its strength ; but the causes of debility were none the less surely at work.

M. Nothomb's skill and eloquence long triumphed over every difficulty. He got through the session of 1844, and by a strenuous effort he carried his Budget in the spring of 1845. The partial election of June, 1845, resulted in Liberal successes at Brussels and Antwerp, and, finding his majority undermined, M. Nothomb asked the King to relieve him of office. He had done his work, and he had done it well. He had held the

breach during a critical period, and he had to some extent retarded the arrival, inevitable, but none the less evil, of that faction-fighting which is the defect, if not the bane, of government by rival parties. Progressive countries, as they call themselves, have so long made party government a fetish that it will need a period of great tranquillity for the nations to discover that the so-called blessing has been sometimes a curse in disguise.

Even the resignation of his favourite Minister would not induce King Leopold to admit that the days of Unionism were over, and that a Constitutional King would have to adapt himself to the strife of parties and their varying fortunes. M. Nothomb's colleagues remained provisionally in office while King Leopold was seeking his successor. In this interregnum General Goblet represented the King's views and wishes in the Cabinet, but his principal participation in the political crisis was the drafting of a circular to Belgium's representatives abroad which heralded more accurately than the author himself may have expected the advent of Governments formed on purely party lines. The more interesting part of this document read as follows :

There is another cause of the results of the recent elections, and unhappily it is more general and deep. This is the tendency among part of the people to reject half-way or medium opinions between the extremes of opposing parties. A representative system naturally gives birth to those contests of opinion which are known as party strife. In all societies subject to this kind of judgment collective interests are formed which bear more or less resemblance to the Whigs and Tories of England. Belgium has not escaped this common law. In the first years of its national independence questions of external policy which overrode every other served as the base and flag of a division that the solution of those difficulties has removed. The two parties existing to-day may be distinguished by one essential difference. One has its influence and roots in the country, the other has them in the towns, and especially in the large towns.

The struggle between them has in recent years become very keen. Without being menacing to public order, it cannot but have some possibility of danger. In order to diminish it, it has been deemed prudent for the Government to take its chief support from one side, and its chief means of action from the other—that is to say, that Ministers should be composed of a majority of Liberals, although supported chiefly by Catholics, in order that a sort of compromise might be attained in regard to men as well as public questions. The Liberals, thus placed in power under such conditions, and being maintained there by other sections of the Chamber, have been exposed to the suspicion of their old friends. However sincere their desire to prevent themselves being carried away, however much they may have striven to keep themselves within the limits of a wise moderation and loyal impartiality, they found themselves very

soon the objects of suspicions and the butt of ceaseless accusations. Their mission, judged from an exclusive point of view, misunderstood, ill-appreciated, elicited reproaches which, however undeserved, did not the less compromise and wear out those who incurred them. The fear of this unjust opinion, and the example furnished by those Ministers who have been its victims, keep men aloof from office whose experience and services would naturally suggest them to the King's choice, and thus a difficulty has arisen in completing the Cabinet. Men draw back before the recriminations that can be foreseen, and the probable unpopularity of a position which has become difficult. The repugnance of the politicians I refer to has been increased by the fact that men of this order suffered most at the recent elections.

Whatever they may be, the difficulties encountered in reconstituting the Cabinet, although real, are not insurmountable, and efforts continue to solve the crisis. I hope the end is not far off. The country, moreover, awaits it with calm. It enjoys profound tranquillity, and reposes in confidence on the high wisdom of the Sovereign presiding over its destinies.

It is not surprising that at this turning-point in the political history of Belgium the King should have found difficulty in inducing any leading politician to form a Ministry on the old lines. He turned to Rogier, but Rogier, wishing to be the leader of an exclusively Liberal party, declined. None of the men who had taken a prominent part in the making of Belgium, and who had passed their career in the Chambers, being eligible or willing to act, the King had to look farther afield, and his choice fell upon M. Van de Weyer. No one had done more than he for the making of Belgium. He had had Parliamentary experience as well as diplomatic, and residence abroad had extended his views over a wider field than the semicircle of the Palace of the Nation. The King had had enough of the refusals of the mere politician ; he turned to a public servant who he knew would reply like a good soldier. M. Van de Weyer accepted the mission.

King Leopold, although he had become most attached to Belgium, and had an enthusiastic regard for and belief in the mass of the Belgian people, was not at all enamoured of the Parliamentary system, nor had he any great sympathy with the so-called party politics of Belgium, which often seemed to him to savour too much of the parish. He wrote most freely on the subject to King Louis Philippe, and the following extracts from this correspondence reveal his true mind :

“ Here the Chamber has been at its usual fooleries ; there are personalities, enmities against Lebeau and Goblet, and then on the part of Gendebien and Co. the desire for a Republic,

for general confusion, by which they may profit. That is sufficiently tiresome, and forces me to be busy with reconstructing the Ministry or forming a new one."

Again, at a later stage, he says :

"Sound judgment also is not our brilliant quality. Incessantly one has to ask how such consequences could possibly be deduced from the given premises. Hitherto royalty has been the rock on which the political existence of the country has exclusively rested ; after fifteen years many folks have not arrived at a notion of that."

Although party passion could not restrain the taunt flung at M. Van de Weyer as "a Minister from over the sea," the Chamber was for a time tranquillised by the impressive style and authority of the new Premier. The Ministers associated with him were men of mark, and included M. Jules Malou, long the leader in opposition of the Catholic party. The Cabinet, for the brief space that it endured, derived most of its reputation from M. Malou's financial measures. M. Van de Weyer, bent on conciliation, was extremely moderate in all his proposals, and yielded more to pressure than the stronger of his colleagues thought he ought to do. But there was one question that he could not evade. Laws had been passed as described in the matters of primary and superior education, but there remained unsolved the question of middle or secondary education.

As the King, in his speech to the Chambers in November, 1845, had promised that such a measure should be brought in during the session, M. Van de Weyer addressed himself to the task. But when the Minister began to draft a Bill, he found that his colleagues were far from united in their opinions. M. Rogier's plan in 1834 had been to create three Royal Academies (Athenées), subject to the exclusive direction of Government, and to leave the communes at liberty to found secondary schools for themselves. The teaching of religion was to be obligatory, and confided to the clergy. While M. Van de Weyer adopted the scheme as the base of his own, he proposed to establish ten State Academies and twelve communal colleges. The communes were to be left the discretion



M. CHARLES ROGIER.

of founding their own secondary schools, with the exception of the places chosen by the State, but they were to receive no Government grant. The teaching of religion was left optional, and subject to the general law. This last clause vitiated the proposal in the eyes of the Catholics, and M. Van de Weyer found himself alone.

M. Malou put the case very succinctly: "If only constitutional and truly Liberal principles are taken into account, the questions raised by the organisation of a system of secondary education would be very easily adjusted. The difficulties are caused by free education being considered not as the use of a right, but as constituting a usurpation, an invasion. The clergy, of whatever religion, is independent and free in its action. Its co-operation cannot be forced. It is to be the sole judge of the conditions under which it would give it." The disagreement of Ministers proved insuperable, and, after an effort to form a fresh Cabinet, M. Van de Weyer resigned, and resumed his diplomatic career (March, 1846). His principal personal achievement was the reorganisation of the Royal Academy of Science, Letters, and Arts, which has flourished and continued to do good work in the intellectual sphere of Belgian life to the present day.

Several incidents of this period may claim attention before we pass on to deal with the new phase in Belgian politics that followed the downfall of the Van de Weyer Ministry. The first of these is the curious Orange plot associated with the name of Van der Smissen. In October, 1840, King William I. abdicated the crown of Holland. He was a disappointed and disillusioned Prince, and he also wanted to marry the Countess d'Oultremont. His eldest son, the Prince of Orange, became King as William II. It is rather difficult to imagine that, after his many attempts, he could have still clung to the hope of recovering Belgium, but at least he kept up his interest in the country, and liked to receive news from it. He could never have expected, however, to receive such a communication as M. Gobbelschroy, one of his Ministers, laid before him soon after his accession.

De Potter, the Brutus of the Belgian Revolution, so good a

Republican in the days of the National Congress that he wished to be the first President of a Belgian Republic, retired to France after the election of King Leopold. But in 1839 he returned to Belgium, and his old discontent revived. After brief consideration, he decided that the situation of his country was bad, and that the only way to save it was by changing the dynasty. He was hostile to King Leopold, who had made a Kingdom where he would have seen a Republic ; but De Potter was not a conspirator. He was a theorist, an idealist, a man who would depose a King with his pen. In Belgium the greatest liberty is accorded to men of this calibre. There is no *lèse-majesté* law ; neither the Constitution nor the Code prescribes any penalty for attacking the existing institutions of the country. The Socialist or the eccentric may indulge freely the widest range of fancy in creating social and political systems. De Potter knew what he was about. He would not put himself in any peril by his lucubrations, but certainly he chose a curious correspondent for his personal confessions in a Dutch Minister. He imparted to M. Gobbelschroy his conviction that the Belgian people were most anxious to get rid of their King, and to throw themselves into the arms of their Dutch brethren. His ideal system was to be a federation of the Provinces or States, but he was unable to supply any information as to how it was to be attained.

From De Potter the dreamer we pass to Van der Smissen the man of action. In 1839 Van der Smissen had been restored to the army and his pension. In 1840, following the vote in the Chamber, he was deprived of his pension, but allowed to remain in Belgium. He got into pecuniary difficulties, and was ready to undertake any enterprise that promised to remove them. He found a confederate in another officer whose financial position was also compromised. General Van der Meere had served in the Belgian army, having on one occasion commanded the garrison of Liége. In the course of time he had been put on the retired list. The pension of a General in the Belgian army was not brilliant. Van der Meere, like his comrade in arms, was in difficulties, and not averse to having them removed. He had also written a work on Grand

Manœuvres, to which General Daine, the hero of Hasselt, had added a preface. General Daine was in command of the troops at Mons, and, with or without reason, his co-operation was counted upon by the ringleaders at Brussels. The conspirators at Brussels, which was the centre of this plot, included several officers who had served in the Belgian contingent in Portugal, and a small body of desperate and needy men were got together as the nucleus of an armed force. Van der Smissen, who was the most active and daring of the leaders, felt confident that he would succeed in his new effort to replace the Orange family on the Belgian throne. There can be no doubt that he communicated his intentions to King William II., and that some funds were placed, through a secret channel, at his disposal.

As none of the gang (the populace called it the conspiracy of the *paniers percés*—i.e., of the spendthrifts) had any money, it is at least certain that someone must have provided it, for they bought four small cannon, some arms, and a good deal of powder, all of which were stored at Van der Smissen's house at Etterbeck, a suburb of Brussels. The plan of the conspirators was as follows: They were to send a waggon of straw into the forage store of the barracks nearest to Laeken, then set it on fire, and while the troops were engaged in putting out the conflagration, the band, led by Van der Smissen and Van der Meere, was to make a descent on Laeken, capture the King and his family, and hold them as hostages till General Daine arrived with his troops from Mons. The Brussels authorities may not have known of this part of the plot, but they had early intimation of the collection of arms at Etterbeck. It was even declared that General Buzen, the War Minister, disguised as a porter, witnessed the delivery of two of the cannon at Van der Smissen's residence.

Having had ocular proof of what was in preparation, General Buzen made a descent on the house at Etterbeck, and captured the leaders and their arsenal on 1st November, 1841. King Leopold was at the moment at his château in the Ardennes, and the following letter to King Louis Philippe shows that he did not treat this final Orange plot at all lightly:

"When a Government has, as ours has, its hands tied

behind its back, there is no shame in confessing it. There is no shame either in demanding assistance when the case occurs from one's allies, when one is entirely on a *peace footing*, and paying to a neighbouring country the ninth part of the revenues of the State for the enjoyment of this peace. I have some reason to believe that if the plot had succeeded King William would have brought his household and the garrison, which he has ready to his hand, by steamboat to Antwerp. Disembarking there with 6,000 men, as he might have done in twenty-four hours, he had been the master of the place, for the Scheldt is now completely undefended. The maritime force he has at his disposal is naturally a force against which we have not a shadow of defence, and we cannot in a time of complete peace maintain a garrison of from 10,000 to 12,000 men at Antwerp; it is nearly all the infantry we have."

Five months after their arrest the conspirators were put upon their trial, and on 25th March, 1842, Van der Smissen, Van der Meere, and two of their assistants were sentenced to death. The effect of the capital sentence was somewhat diminished by the prior statement of the Crown Prosecutor that it would not be enforced, and as a matter of fact it was commuted to banishment, Van der Meere proceeding to America, and Van der Smissen to England, where his wife, a daughter of Admiral Sir R. Graves, and kinswoman of the Duke of Richmond, was well known. No positive proof was obtainable against General Daine, who was simply removed from his command. The Van der Smissen conspiracy was the last Orange movement in Belgium. Despite the alarm it created at the moment, it had really no great importance. The mass of the people were thoroughly loyal to the new régime, and beyond a few adventurous and impecunious soldiers the plot found no sympathisers.

Out of this episode, which even at The Hague was regarded as sealing the pretensions of the House of Orange to rule in Belgium, a little good came. The relations between Holland and Belgium under the treaty of 1838 were left in a cumbrous state. Four commissioners were entrusted with the task of dealing with the separate matters coming under the heads of

pilotage, finance, Customs, and tolls. It was in the interest of both countries to simplify this intricate procedure, and Baron Falck, the Dutch Minister in Brussels, saw this as clearly as the Belgian authorities. The French Government also declared it to be of the highest importance to "end the contention between Holland and Belgium, so that Holland might be brought over to the Franco-Belgic union." The outcome of this state of feeling was the signature of a direct Convention between the two countries in November, 1842, and since its conclusion not a cloud has fallen upon their neighbourly relations. The credit of this Convention belonged to M. Nothomb, who declared: "This act places Belgium in an absolutely normal position. It will be of the greatest importance for us in regard to the commercial relations we shall have to make from time to time with all of our neighbours. This act will also show Europe that Belgium knows how to manage her own affairs. It also does honour to the two nations once united, since separated, and now reconciled."

The Convention with Holland was the precursor of the commercial treaty with France, which was under discussion for several years before it reached the final stage. The French Government, no matter what was the name of the presiding Minister, had always some difficulty in appreciating the exact position of Belgium, which, almost unconsciously, it seemed to assume was an offshoot of France. When France proposed to settle its commercial relations with Belgium she demanded a uniform tariff and a Customs union. This would have bound Belgium as closely to France as the German States were to one another by their Zollverein. But King Leopold took an opposite view. He would not have a Customs union, although he was willing to sign a preferential treaty with France. He was resolute in refusing to compromise, by such a concession to France, the political independence of Belgium. "There must be," he said, "a line of demarcation between the two Customs. The rest of Europe must have palpable proof that there is no incorporation."

The different point of view between the French and the Belgian Governments led to the negotiations extending over a

period of five years, but although the King would not sign away his rights, he was most anxious to conclude a commercial treaty with France, more especially as one had been signed in 1844 with the German Union. He rather chafed, too, at the inability of his Ministers to seize favourable opportunities to settle the question, and at their inclination to defer making a decision till the last moment. He wrote some wise words on this very point which possess more than passing value :

“ A little country which negotiates with a powerful neighbour must profit by favourable moments. They do not recur so often as there is temptation to believe. You are impressed by petty events, the result of *very shabby local intrigues*, whereas the question is about the means of insuring the political existence of Belgium, and this existence is not so certain that it would be prudent to compromise it, as there seems a disposition to do.”

It was in reference to the same subject also that he wrote : “ In Belgium people are slightly spoilt. They consider they ought always to obtain the very best conditions. I have from this point of view quite spoilt the country by obtaining for it fifteen years ago things it had not by itself alone the least chance of getting.”

An end comes to most things. On 13th December, 1845, the commercial treaty was signed, its progress in the last stage being much accelerated by the presence of King Leopold in Paris. The commercial treaty with France was followed in July, 1846, by an agreement of a similar nature with Holland.

Many events of great importance to King Leopold personally occurred during this period, but it would divert us too much from our principal task, which is to trace the main course of Belgium's history, if we were to do more than to refer to them.

Of such events the marriage in 1840 of his niece, Queen Victoria, with his nephew, Prince Albert, was the most important. While ardently wishing this consummation, King Leopold displayed extraordinary tact in not giving the smallest excuse to anyone for saying that he arranged the match. At a slightly earlier period another of his nephews had married the young Queen Maria of Portugal, for whom a Belgian con-

tingent* fought very well in 1832-4 during the struggle with her usurping uncle, Don Miguel. His niece, too, the sister of Queen Maria's husband, married the Duc de Nemours, so that the ramifications of the Coburg family were extending throughout Europe. Indirectly Belgium benefited also by the increased influence of its King. There was far more force in the King's own analysis of the situation, when he said that royalty is the rock upon which Belgian prosperity is built, than was believed in the country itself.

The accord between England and France which had made its happiest manifestation in the measures that resulted in the independence of Belgium was not of that solid nature that precluded the possibility of disagreement. The memories of ancient rivalry were not easily to be obliterated. There were still burning questions, the mere mention of which was sufficient to set the two Foreign Offices by the ears. Unfortunately, too, the French Minister of the day, M. Thiers, was almost as bellicose as Lord Palmerston. King Louis Philippe was at heart for peace, but there was so much talk of war, and such a mustering of troops, that it seemed more than likely that hostilities would really ensue, more especially when the matter in dispute bore the ominous title of the Spanish marriages.

The ruler of Spain was the young Queen Isabella, and the problem was to find her a husband. The French Government declared he must be a Bourbon, and a descendant of Louis XIV. King Louis Philippe would have liked the husband to be his own son, the Duc d'Aumale, but as the connection with France would have been a little too close by this arrangement, he did not press the point. For this reason he stood out all the more firmly for the hand of the Queen's sister, the Infanta Louise Fernanda, being given to another of his sons, the Duc de Montpensier. The French pretension in itself was not unreasonable, and nobody seemed able to provide a more suitable candidate, when the suggestion was made by someone to select Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Kohary, brother of the King of Portugal and the Duchesse de Nemours, as Queen Isabella's

* The second Belgian contingent sent to Portugal was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Lecharlier, the officer who had done so well under Daine in 1831.

husband. The Prince Consort took up his cousin's case rather warmly, but King Leopold, not to give umbrage to Louis Philippe, stood rigidly aside. He described his attitude in the following words: "I will only pronounce for my nephew's candidature if it is of a nature to bring about harmony between all the Powers; otherwise I shall preserve on this subject the most absolute silence."

In 1846 Lord Palmerston declared that the husband must be either Prince Leopold or one of the two Spanish Bourbon Princes, the Duke of Cadiz and the Duke of Seville. The last named, and not Prince Leopold, despite the Prince Consort's wish, was the true English candidate, but it was more than suspected that it was intended to compensate the Coburg Prince with the hand of the Infanta. To avert this blow the French Government hastened the marriages it desired. On 10th October, 1846, Queen Isabella was married to her cousin, Francis d'Assise, Duke of Cadiz, and her sister to the Duc de Montpensier. This French triumph brought England and France to the verge of war, and it needed all King Leopold's influence to clear up the clouds. Louis Philippe, writing to him on the occasion, said:

"Whatever may be the result of your kind efforts to bring Queen Victoria to a more sound and just appreciation of the whole business, I am anxious to thank you for them, and to say how sensible I am of them."

If events had pursued their normal course, no one can say what the final outcome of the Spanish marriages might not have been, for with so many clashing interests the sore feeling between London and Paris might have produced an ebullition of hostility that would have led to war. But the downfall of the July monarchy, amid some of the most dramatic incidents of modern history, banished the spectre of a war between England and France. In the epoch we have reached all the States had to give their thoughts and attention to their own internal affairs without seeking quarrels outside them.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Troubled Period.

It was not, as the result showed, unfortunate that the cleavage of political parties and the establishment of government on rigid party lines should have occurred in Belgium on the eve of one of the most troubled periods in European history. The Belgian Constitution was far ahead of the political system established in any European country except England and Switzerland, and it conceded by anticipation much, if not all, that the nations demanded nearly twenty years later at the epoch we have reached. The disturbance of human affairs was due not solely to political causes. There were material as well as social troubles. New conditions had been introduced into the world of industry and commerce, and people had not yet accommodated themselves to them. Considerable prosperity in one class of the community existed side by side with considerable penury in another. More than one staple industry of Belgium was menaced by the introduction of machinery and the competition of the New World. At this critical moment, when horse-flesh was sold in the markets of Flanders in lieu of meat, the same mysterious and terrible blight that caused the famine in Ireland destroyed the potato crop throughout the Netherlands. The material sufferings of the community were of the kind that makes men complain of the political system under which they live, and wish to change it.

Such was the situation in the country when, on the resignation of M. Van de Weyer, King Leopold recognised that the day of Unionism was over, and that it would be necessary to employ homogeneous ministries instead of mixed. There was,

indeed, an interval during which, as M. Malou put it, "an attempt was made to brew a mixture," and many thought with him that a mediocre mixture was better than an excellent uniformity. But these attempts ended in nothing, and at last the King turned to M. Rogier, and asked him to form an administration among his friends. But Rogier stipulated for the right to dissolve the Chambers if he chose, and the King, whether he did not like the request or to be bargained with at all, declined. He then appealed to the loyalty of M. de Theux, who formed an exclusively Catholic Administration; but the majority in the Chamber was Liberal, and the most energetic Parliamentarians were Liberal also. The clearest demonstration of party warfare, and the intentions of the Liberal party was, however, to be made outside the Chamber.

One of the Articles of the Belgian Constitution sanctions public meetings and confers the right of association. Two months after the formation of the last De Theux Ministry the announcement was made that a Liberal Congress would be held in the capital on 14th June, 1846. The Congress was to be composed of delegates from the Provincial Associations. This unprecedented manifestation of political independence, which emphasised the recent severance of the two parties in the State, undoubtedly caused King Leopold some anxiety and heart-searching. It was an occurrence that seemed more ominous in the anticipation than it proved in the reality. While people in Belgium did not know exactly what to think about it, foreigners magnified its purport until it seemed to assume revolutionary proportions. Louis Philippe declared that "It reminds me of nothing less than the Commune of Paris of 1792 dictating from the Hôtel de Ville to the National Convention at the Tuileries all it pleased to impose."

The following passages from the French King's letter are extremely interesting, because they show how profoundly ignorant he was of his own position :

"I know of no means to be furnished by Belgian legislation for paralysing, striking down, and stamping out this audacious meeting if it do not allow of prevention, which would

be preferable. They say the Belgian Constitution authorises associations, but I know not how far this authorisation extends, and I doubt whether it can extend even in law to authorising the formation of an assembly of delegates, an assembly elected without legal authority, etc. It is nothing less in my eyes than a national revolutionary convention established, since it would be so established, independently of the laws and the constitutional authority of royalty. I talked over the matter just now with my Ministers, and there was among them but one outcry at the incompatibility of such a state of things with the existence of the legal and constitutional government of the country. . . . We are by no means disposed to allow the Belgian crisis to reach such extremities. . . . Seeing before us the possibility of such events, I feel the need of knowing your opinion, first, as to what you think you can do to prevent them ; and, secondly, as to what, in case your Government turned out to be powerless, and again in case it were swamped, you would think you ought to, and could, ask of us. . . . We must use prevision and concert what rapid storms may unexpectedly demand."

Despite the alarm in Paris, King Leopold remained cool, and consulted his own Ministers. The Congress was mainly directed against the politicians in office, but M. de Theux at once declared that the Congress was perfectly legal, and that it should not be interfered with. Three hundred delegates were chosen in the towns and country from the Liberal committees to form the Congress. They included barristers and burgomasters, members of both Chambers, and some of the leading merchants and manufacturers. The resolutions they passed with practical unanimity were not of the revolutionary character that King Louis Philippe's imagination had conjured up. They related to the formation of a general Liberal Confederation, which was to select suitable candidates, and to look after the union and discipline of the party. While the Congress was not at all menacing for either the country or the monarchy, it was unquestionably epoch-marking for the Liberal Party. It provided it with an organisation and a programme far more clear and comprehensive than anything

possessed by its opponents, with the result that the Liberal Party enjoyed a practical monopoly of political power, with very brief intervals of exclusion from it, in Belgium for nearly forty years.

Without looking so far ahead, it may be asserted that the Liberal Congress, by providing a programme and an organisation, equipped its party well for the coming General Election, which arrived in June, 1847. On the other hand, M. de Theux and his colleagues were blindly confident as to the security of their position. The elections went against the Catholic Government, and Ministers at once resigned. In this new situation the King no longer hesitated about requesting Rogier, who termed his programme that of "the new policy," to form a fresh Administration on his own terms—that is to say, with the tacit right to dissolve the Chambers if outvoted.

Belgian Liberal writers have insinuated that King Leopold did not willingly give way, and that it went against the grain for him to yield to Rogier on his own terms. But this is to do King Leopold a great injustice. His uppermost thought was not the comparatively petty differences of party rivalry, but the great and overshadowing problem of preserving Belgium as an independent Kingdom. He knew that by the nature of things Belgium's existence was precarious, and he feared that the development of party feud would weaken the national spirit and true patriotism.

When one of his Ministers was expatiating on the importance of having a homogeneous Cabinet, the King dryly rejoined: "Yes, but to have a perfect Cabinet you must first of all have a country." It was of the country that King Leopold was always thinking, and perhaps there is a grain of truth in the supposition that with his larger views and wider experience there was always something slightly petty to the King's mind about Belgian domestic politics. He never, so far as is known, put his views on paper, but the judgment he passed in his own inner mind on the Parliamentary men in the Rue de la Loi may be reasonably inferred from his reserve and aloofness. To none of them did he extend the friendly confidence and

cordiality that he displayed to Goblet,* Le Hon, Lebeau, Nothomb and De Theux, Van Praet and Van de Weyer, men who had been with him through the fire of achieving Belgian independence, and whose loyalty and devotion he had tested.

On one point King Leopold found in M. Rogier a closer sympathy in his views than was perhaps the case with any other of his Ministers. They were agreed that Belgium required a good army, and that it provided the only sure guarantee of her independence. In one of his speeches in the Chamber Rogier declared: "For a long time to come a well-organised army is the first need of the country. I love the army, and the sentiment is not the birth of yesterday. I figured in its ranks for a cause, and at an epoch which will always fill the first place in my memories. I love the army not only because I know it to be ready to uphold constitutional order, without which there is no true liberty, but also because—and I do not hesitate to say it—the army is the greatest lever of civilisation in the country."

M. Rogier began his Ministry with certain declarations intended to allay the uneasiness that might be felt in Catholic circles by the advent of a purely Liberal Ministry to office. While declaring that his Government was strictly laic, he declared that it would show the greatest respect for religion, and protect the clergy. It was necessary to restore confidence, for some apprehension had been created in the financial world by the Liberal triumph and assertiveness, and credit was beginning to be shaken. King Leopold was very much concerned on this point, and the only opinion he is known to have written on the Liberal Congress referred to this very matter: "The conduct of the country of recent years, as displayed in the Liberal Congress, has naturally not inspired great enthusiasm among financiers, and private persons have sold their holdings." But the principal points in the Rogier programme

* To Goblet the King expressed himself perhaps with more freedom at this period than to any other Minister. In one of his letters to him he wrote: "Constitutional government, especially in a small country, takes a great deal of time, and causes sight to be lost of the questions which alone can secure to the country a political future."

related to measures beneficial for the working-classes* and secondary education.

It was perhaps a blessing in disguise, even for the Catholic party, that the Liberals had come to power in Belgium before the revolutionary storms of 1848 swept across Europe. A popular programme had been drawn up by the delegates of the people, and a Government had come into being to give it effect. The tranquillising influence of this coincidence could not but be great. King Leopold saw it in this light, for writing a few days after news had come from Paris of the downfall of the July Monarchy, he wrote: "Here, thank God, I do not quite see what more could be desired. We are to such an extent *Liberalised* that, with the exception of universal suffrage, I do not quite see what could be done in the way of novelty. I have, however, written this morning to Rogier to beg him to keep an eye on the agents of trouble who might be sent us from Paris."

The French Revolution of July, 1830, had paved the way for, and largely promoted, the Belgian Revolution of the following month. What influence would the more serious and sanguinary Revolution of February, 1848, in Paris exert on the tranquillity of Belgium? was a question asked with some anxiety by all friends of order in that country.

We have seen how very alarmed Louis Philippe was at the summoning of a Liberal Congress in Brussels, and how ready he was to assist in putting down Belgian Liberalism by force, yet he was quite blind to the perils of his own position. Thiers, wiser in matters of internal than external policy, wrote in 1847: "France is advancing with a giant's stride towards a catastrophe." Yet Louis Philippe's address to the Chambers on 28th December, 1847, was full of self-complacency, and breathed a sense of security. The condition of politics in France was most unsatisfactory. The Guizot Ministry was unpopular, the July Monarchy, which was nominally constitutional, had insensibly become autocratic, the foreign policy

* Among these were votes for the purchase of machinery and improved implements for linen manufacture, the establishment of apprentice schools, the removal of import duties on food, and the prohibition of the export of food.

of the State, which had been originally framed on lines of sympathy for the nationalities, had, mainly in consequence of the alienation of England on account of the Spanish marriages and other circumstances, gradually veered round to combinations with Austria and other absolutist Powers, and the French people were openly discontented at the exclusive system under which a nation of nearly 35,000,000 had only 240,000 voters.

The Citizen King failed utterly to grasp what the citizens wanted; still less did he realise what they were prepared to do. When the blow fell it was with dramatic suddenness. Louis Philippe, on the first outbreak of the storm, abdicated in favour of his grandson, the Count of Paris,* but the abdication was not accepted, and on the following day—24th February—the King and all the members of the Orleans family were fleeing for their lives in all directions, some to Germany, but most to England. Happily there was no bloodshed on this occasion. The promptness with which the Orleans family fled, the desire of all responsible men to assist their escape before the revolutionary storm reached its height, averted a repetition of the tragedies of 1793.

When the news of what had occurred in Paris on 23rd and 24th February reached Brussels, it became clear that the situation required vigilance and readiness to act. On 1st March the Belgian Government had no certain news of the intentions of the new régime in France, although M. de Lamartine, the titular Foreign Minister to the Republican Government, had given an assurance that it had no desire to interfere with its neighbours. However honourable and pacific the intentions of the official world might be, there was no knowing how far the Republican fervour, once it was stirred up in Paris, might not extend, and it was necessary, as King Leopold said, to be prepared for all eventualities caused by the provocative acts of individuals. At this crisis the Republican doctrine found

* Eldest son of the Duke of Orleans, who took part in the siege of Antwerp. This Prince, whose merit was admitted by all, was killed in 1842 as the result of an accident, jumping out of his carriage with which the horses had run away. He married in 1837 Princess Helene of Mecklenberg-Schwerin, whose virtues, courage, and energy during the troubles of 1848 acquired for her the epithet of "the heroic" Duchess of Orleans.

only one advocate in Belgium—M. Castiau—and he was so abashed at his isolation that he resigned his seat in the Chamber and retired into private life. Even De Potter published an open letter to his countrymen exhorting them to adhere to and support the Constitution under which they lived. M. Rogier, whose party spirit always yielded to his patriotic duty in the hour of danger, rose to the occasion and declared :

“ So lively a sense of nationality and independence has manifested itself that the political sentiment of the country leaves us full of the conviction of the most absolute security ; but if revolutionary manifestations were to derive their origin from other than national sentiments, if we had in our free and tranquil land to experience outside influences which were only the sentiment of foreign countries, then we should ask you to act with double energy.”

M. Delfosse, one of the representatives of Liége, the city of Belgium most in sympathy at all times with French movements, expressed the country's unanimous support when he said :

“ The Government has understood its duty, and I am confident that it will discharge it. The interest of Belgium is to preserve intact the liberty it enjoys. An honourable member has said that the ideas of the French Revolution will go round the world. I reply that in order for them to go round the world there is no necessity for them to pass through Belgium. We have established in Belgium the great principles of liberty and equality. They are inscribed in the Constitution, and they are written in all our hearts.”

Notwithstanding the pacific assurances and honourable intentions of the Provisional French Government, which established official relations with that of Belgium on 1st March, it was well that military precautions were not neglected, and that a close watch was kept on the French frontier. Whatever the French Minister might say about the desire of himself and his colleagues to respect Belgian independence, this did not prevent the extreme Republicans from wishing to extend the alleged benefits of their political system to their neighbours, and especially to Belgium. The Belgian colony in Paris was

also large, and it necessarily included some elements not greatly attached to the cause of law and order. The Parisian extremists and the Belgian exiles conceived that it would be a fine thing to put an end to the Monarchy in Belgium, as had been done in France, and to treat King Leopold in the same way as his father-in-law. And about the middle of March they resolved to make the first move.

The leaders of the plot decided to make use of the railway, and they engaged a special train ostensibly for a holiday trip for some hundreds of Belgians to visit Brussels. Trains were not then so fast as they have since become, and it was arranged that the party should receive provisions *en route*. Still more important, they were to be supplied with muskets and ammunition at Valenciennes. The arrangements were good, but they broke down. Provisions were not forthcoming, and warning reached the Belgian authorities at Mons, who prepared a prettily devised ruse for the reception of the invader. The train, with its 800 warriors on board, reached Valenciennes in safety. They were still enthusiastic if hungry, and on the train stopping in the station they waited for their arms with admirable patience. While thus expectant the French engine was removed, and a powerful Belgian engine attached in its place. The train at once moved off at a good pace, and dragged the band of invaders towards Belgium. Even then the occupants did not seem to realise what was taking place. The first station on crossing the frontier at this point is Quievrain, where the train was turned into a siding, and promptly surrounded by troops held in readiness. The invaders jumped out of the carriages in panic, but, being surprised and unarmed, had no choice save surrender. The only wounded were those who injured themselves by jumping too heedlessly out of the carriages, with the result that some broke their legs and others their arms.

Such was the fate of the advanced guard of the Republican army of invasion. It had been arranged for supporting bodies to follow in successive trains during the following week or ten days. These trains conveyed altogether 2,000 Republicans towards their destination, but on learning what had happened

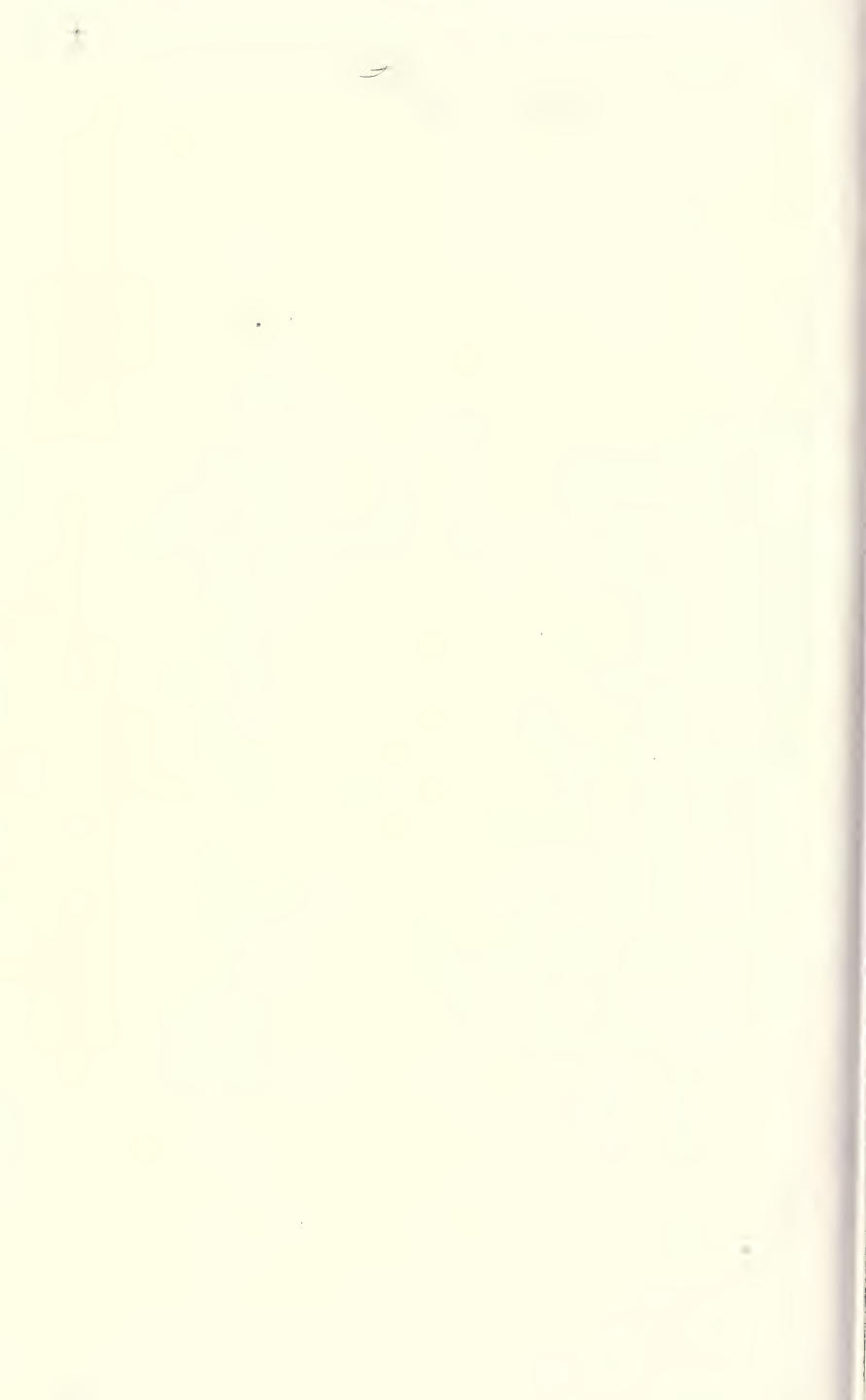
at Quievran the supporting forces did not cross the frontier, but quietly disbanded or returned to Paris. A certain number, however, of the Belgians, who had seen in the adventure a good way of getting home without paying for their railway tickets, quietly crossed into Belgium as loyal and devoted citizens.

The revolutionary episodes in Belgium of March, 1848, were not to end, however, without the proverbial whiff of grape-shot. Some of the extremists made their headquarters at Lille, and in the mining population the idea of stirring up the Belgians gained a little ground. News reached the Belgian officer in command at Tournai, General Fleury-Duray, that a body of men had assembled in the neighbourhood of Lille, and were likely to attempt to raid the frontier. He accordingly moved forward a portion of his troops with guns to Mouscron, the frontier Customs station between Tournai and Lille. In the morning of 26th March a body of armed men, singing the Marseillaise, dashed across the frontier, and advanced towards Mouscron. Before they got far they encountered an advanced Belgian post at the hamlet of Risquons-Tout. Here, at this very appropriately named spot ("Let us risk all ") for such an encounter, the question of a Republic for Belgium was promptly decided. As the invading horde—it was nothing better than an armed rabble, dangerous to the peaceful citizen, but contemptible for war—advanced, in defiance of the summons to lay down their arms, the order rang out for the soldiers to fire, and they fired with equal precision and effect. A few rounds from the fieldpieces, a few volleys from the 200 infantry with them, sent the invaders back quicker even than they had advanced, leaving, however, a good many killed and wounded on the ground.

King Leopold, writing on this affair, said : " I am happy to see how well our troops behaved. It gives us the measure of what they now are." But while the collision at Risquons-Tout was the only piece of open fighting that occurred during the revolutionary period, the state of acute anxiety continued during the whole of 1848, and waxed or waned with the course of events at Paris. The Belgian Government had to be con-



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stantly on the watch, and to provide the means to meet any contingency that might arise. To provide for increased military expenditure it had to obtain financial resources by anticipating revenue (calling up in advance taxes on land and houses to the extent of half a million sterling), and by raising a State loan for one million sterling. At the end of May, King Leopold wrote: "How right we were to take precautions against those bands which, to a certainty, would have attacked us if the invasion of the Constituent Assembly had succeeded." And again in February, 1849: "For a year past we have had a difficult task, but a glorious one also."

The tragic and troubled epoch of 1848 passed over Belgium and left it undisturbed. The result was due to the main fact that what other nations were struggling for Belgium had already obtained, and the programme of the French Republicans consequently offered no attractions to those who lived under the Belgian Constitution and appreciated its sane and equitable provisions. But when the crisis had passed in States which only emerged from the storm in a battered and changed condition, then came the moment of appreciation for the Constitution of Belgium, which, home-made as it was, had ridden out the gale. If the reader doubts whether the stress was so great as alleged, King Leopold's letter on his relations with the Ministers who acted with him throughout the period reveals the truth: "The ties which bind me affectionately to them are not such as are easily broken. Men cannot pass such a year as that from 24th February, 1848, to 24th February, 1849, together, united and confident, without cherishing sentiments such as soldiers who have fought a good fight against the enemy feel towards their comrades."

It was in Holland, the old enemy of 1830-9, that the most lively sentiment of gratitude was expressed to Belgium for having served as a bulwark against the inroad of subversive ideas. The Dutch Foreign Minister, Count Van der Duyn, wrote: "The news of a Republican movement in Belgium was, at the least, very premature. This little country seems, on the contrary, contented and strongly attached to its young nationality. The Government takes wise and able measures

to that end. Are you not struck, as I am, with this fact, that it seems that the events of 1830, and the separation then effected and so deeply deplored, becomes, under the present circumstances, a sort of safeguard for the House of Orange, even here? Is it not more than probable that if the Kingdom of the Netherlands of that day could have held together until to-day, with the same ideas of government called *Conservative*, the events of to-day would have upset *the whole concern*, and far more seriously?"

Put into plain words, the Dutch Minister's language meant, if the United Kingdom of the Netherlands had continued to endure to the present day under the old régime, the Revolution in France would have been certain to have spread to Belgium, and there is no saying that it would not then have extended to Holland also. How thankful we Hollanders ought to be that the Belgians left us in good time without either of us doing the other much harm, and set their own house in order against the coming storm!

But although the most interesting, the testimony in recognition of Belgium's service to the cause of constitutional progress and true liberty in Europe was not confined to Holland. The Prussian Government, which had had its own troubles, declared that "In respect of Belgium all forms of admiration are exhausted. . . . We expected no less from a people and Government to which treaties had guaranteed a nationality of which they in the hour of danger show themselves to be so worthy." In Austria, where the storm had been more violent than in Prussia, the recognition was even fuller: "You can sail calmly amidst storms, and I congratulate you upon it. It is not an easy matter. The political education of your people has been well managed."

Prince Metternich, who had been the intellect of the Holy Alliance, was one of the wrecked statesmen of the old school in 1848. Driven from Vienna, he took refuge at Brussels, where his father had been Austria's representative nearly sixty years before. His confession is especially interesting because he had been the prime mover in the obstructive tactics of the London Conference: "Had we known you better in

1831, we would have behaved better to you, but we regarded you as an ungovernable set. The manner in which Belgium behaves with a Constitution so badly drawn up, and almost impossible of execution, a Constitution which would be the worst in Europe if that of Norway did not exist, proves how easy the Belgians are to govern." Prince Metternich was no lover of Constitutions.

The Constitution which Prince Metternich could not understand and affected to despise was Belgium's real safety-valve. She found content in it, and the true service that she rendered to European peace was in showing during a period of great commotion, marked by many sanguinary episodes, that a nation, when it is contented at heart with its political institutions, can remain unmoved by the storms that prevail in neighbouring and less favoured countries. The tranquillity of Belgium in 1848 was the visible proof of the wisdom of those who had co-operated in making her an independent State after 1830. In that year of political earthquake, when no institutions were respected, and when thrones were swept away by an avalanche of popular discontent, any barrier that resisted the flood was welcomed by those who were engaged in what seemed a life-and-death struggle with a frenzied democracy. Amid the strife of Continental Europe, which resounded with the clash of arms and the shrieks of fanatics who wished to end the reign of law and order in a river of blood, the sight of Belgium, calm, confident, and contented, could not but produce a reassuring and encouraging effect on those who felt their courage and their hope failing them.

It is probable that the events of 1848, while producing no effect on the internal tranquillity of Belgium, were not without their influence on her domestic politics. The King could not but be struck by the loyalty of his Ministers who belonged to the Liberal party, by the steadfastness with which they supported the Crown, and by the firmness with which they declared that the Constitution of 1831 needed no retouching. The Ministers themselves, seeing the peril of other Governments, could not but be cautious and circumspect in their own proceedings.

The Belgian people, appreciating the advantages of peace

and tranquillity, began to realise that they had at last become a nation. During the crisis King Leopold received many tokens of popularity and respect. When he rode through the streets of Brussels he was followed by a cheering crowd. When he attended the national fêtes and distributed flags to the Civic Guard he received a public ovation. There is some reason to believe that in the early part of the year 1848 King Leopold was rather despondent about the chances of the dynasty, but before the year closed all his doubts had ended, and he was more than ever resolved to consolidate the position of Belgium in Europe. Something of this strengthened purpose is revealed in the following speech made to the Civic Guard on the occasion referred to :

“ In addressing to you a few words, I experience not only very lively emotion, but also very legitimate pride. This fine country, abode of the earliest civilisation, had for a long time hoped for an existence—a national existence—for itself, but unfortunately its hopes had been often deceived and the destinies of the country subordinated to interests which were not its own. At last, eighteen years ago, you succeeded in winning that often-invoked existence. For the first time you belonged to yourselves. Of this independent existence you have made a noble and patriotic use, and you have thus firmly cemented it. In this situation you were surprised by a political crisis without parallel in history. As yet you have passed through it gloriously—so gloriously that many a country has adopted your political organisation as a model; your name is everywhere respected and honoured, and you must feel it deserves to be. Let us know how to maintain this position, let us go on as we have gone hitherto, and so shall we insure ourselves an honourable name in history and a future full of glory.”


It is now necessary to return to the Rogier Ministry, and describe briefly its work during this period. Constituted on 12th August, 1847, one of its most remarkable features was that it introduced a new name to Belgian politics—Frère-Orban.* Walthere Frère, a barrister of Liège, had attracted

* The career of Frère-Orban has been treated in great detail and considerable length by M. Paul Hymans, the brilliant leader of the Belgian Liberal Party of to-day.

attention by his eloquence during the Liberal Congress, but he was so young and so unknown on entering the Chamber after the June elections that surprise was expressed when Rogier invited him to join the Ministry. The future Premier had married the daughter of a rich Liège manufacturer, and, in the Belgian fashion, her name of Orban was tacked on to her husband's, who thenceforth became known by the compound Frère-Orban.

The Orban family was at that time suspected of Orangist sympathies, and, rightly or wrongly, it was said that King Leopold rather objected to his inclusion in the Ministry on that ground ; but if the King did object—which is far from certain—it is probable that it was on the score of his youth and inexperience. Frère-Orban himself was somewhat diffident about accepting. It was not long before his brilliant oratory made a profound impression in the Chamber, and more than justified his selection. The programme of the new Ministry included three projects of the greatest practical importance: viz., the founding of a national bank for easing the financial position—M. Malou, of the preceding Catholic Ministry, is entitled to the credit of the inception of such an institution—measures for the benefit of labour, and a measure of secondary education to complete the educational system of the country. All these proposals were passed into laws during the years 1848-50.

This legislation was preceded by a lowering of the franchise qualification, which almost doubled the number of voters. Under the law of 1832 there were only 45,000 voters in Belgium for 4,000,000 of people. It was proposed to reduce the *cens electoral* to the minimum of forty-two francs of direct taxes. This was the first plank in the new policy announced by Rogier and Frère, but Parliamentary opposition was threatened, and it seemed likely that the Senate's veto would be exercised. Then came the French Revolution, and the Chambers, swayed by the fears of the hour, at once passed the new Liberal measure, raising the electorate to nearly 80,000. The Chamber thereupon dissolved, and at the elections that followed in June, 1848, eighty-five Liberals were returned, as against twenty-three Catholics. The latter party lost also its principal leaders,

including Malou. When the new Chambers assembled, the Liberals assumed the attitude of the conquerors, and treated the Catholics as the conquered. 

This state of things suited the arrogant and masterful spirit of Frère-Orban, who became the moving force in the Ministry. He was not less the moving force because he was a more skilful Parliamentary tactician than any of his colleagues, or, indeed, of his rivals: At a much later period of his career he was called the Belgian Gladstone, and the comparison was not inapt. But in the larger sphere of statecraft Frère-Orban, like other doctrinaires, believed too much in the infallibility of a principle, and confined his view too exclusively to the position under his eyes, to be classed among statesmen. He was essentially the man of a party, and he was fortunate in making his political début, for all the events of 1848 were favourable for such a man, and more especially when he happened to call himself a Liberal. In other countries the fatal year, as it was called, produced revolutions; in Belgium it produced Frère-Orban, with "a new policy to direct its affairs."

For King Leopold the situation thus created was one of some delicacy and difficulty, and if he had not found support in the moderation of Rogier, who served as the brake on his colleague's impetuosity, there is no saying that he would not have insisted on making the abdication of the throne which he voluntarily offered in March, 1848. Had he done so, all Frère-Orban's counsels of perfection would not have availed to save Belgium from falling a victim to Napoleonic ambition after the revival of the Empire.

Some minor questions were settled and passed into law, such as the abolition of the stamp duty on newspapers. The establishment in 1850 of a National Bank, with power to issue notes on the security of one-third cash and two-thirds negotiable securities in its possession, also raised no difficulties; but it may be noted as a curious fact that M. Malou, who conceived such a scheme in 1847, was destined to modify Frère-Orban's charter in 1872. But a more controversial subject was raised early in 1849, when a proposal was brought forward for State

control over charitable gifts. Frère-Orban was a zealous advocate of State control in all matters, and he proposed that charitable bequests of all kinds should be administered by the State, and if he could have enforced his own theories in disregard for those of everyone else, he would have liked to merge all donations and legacies in a single and common fund.

King Leopold intervened in this matter with words of moderation, pointing out that in England and America no fetters were placed on individual benefactions, and that it would be very short-sighted policy to do so in Belgium. The King's efforts procured a postponement of the question for some years. On the other hand, the establishment of a State savings-bank and of State insurance had the King's strong support. The discussion of these matters gave Rogier the opportunity of making a fine speech on the task of government under modern conditions: "The rôle of the Government in modern States must be this: it has to put itself in relation with the different classes of society, and more particularly with the disinherited and suffering classes, in order to endeavour to bring more well-being, greater morality, and some comfort into their lives." These words were spoken in June, 1849, in the Chamber at Brussels. They have not lost their force anywhere to-day.

There was another question on which King Leopold felt quite as strongly as any Radical vaunting in the name, and that was the improvement of the conditions and also, it may be added, the opportunities of labour. His letter of 23rd May, 1849, to M. Rogier formed almost a programme on this question, which was realised in the succeeding years:

"I have already several times communicated to the Council my views on the imperative necessity of assuring productive work to the industries of the country. The Council has recognised once more the usefulness of measures having this end in view, but mention was at the same time made of difficulties which these measures might encounter in the Chambers. The question is very simple. The greater part of the products of Belgian industry has no reason to fear foreign competition in the different markets, but with the exception of

certain rich industries it finds itself in a position of almost absolute inability to reach those markets in the absence of establishments in a large way of trade. The question of the right to labour has been put forward, and the attention of the working-classes has been directed to the various theories put forward in favour of labour. Without wishing to deliver an opinion on this grave question, I must still say that if there be any country where Government is called upon to come to the assistance of labour, Belgium, more than any other, is in that position. She cannot be reproached with it ; it is the effect of historical causes. But, as I think, the country has a right to say to its Government : ‘ Our produce is good, and there are markets where we might dispose of it advantageously, but we cannot get to them *by our own efforts* ; help us to put ourselves within reach of these markets.’ Would it be possible for the Government to meet so reasonable a demand with a negative ? I think not. What renders the matter urgent is the probability that the European market will fall more and more into decadence, and as there is need of time for distant enterprise, labour might suddenly find itself in distress. If this want of work occurred, there is no doubt that it would be obligatory to *give help* in the shape of subsidies. Productive work would cease, the working populations would be no longer able to live unless by means of assistance ; and habits of labour, valuable as they are for a country, would be lost, and would probably give place to social disorganisation. I think, then, the time has come when fresh delays would be inexcusable, and so much the more in that the sacrifices demanded of you are not out of proportion to the advantages which may result therefrom ; whilst the system of assistance to which you will certainly be forced to have recourse would be at least ten times as costly, and that without profit, without return, and even with the chance of becoming a source of evil to the country.”

There will be occasion to refer to this letter farther on in reference to Belgian colonial schemes, but before closing the period of full and complete Liberal triumph, it is necessary to refer to one of the laws passed under such influences. This was the long-adjourned law of secondary education. This

measure, which came into effect in June, 1850, gave the State the control, practically speaking, of secondary education. There was to be official control throughout, but the communes were left the privilege of providing the funds. Private schools of this class were left undisturbed, but they soon became the exception among the mass of State-founded institutions. The measure, although disguised, was directed against the influence of the Catholic Church, and the Pope issued an encyclical letter calling on the Catholics to rally round their leaders. One of them, M. Dechamps, who had been Foreign Minister in the last Ministry, declared: "Nowhere else was there to be seen so strong a centralisation of power, or such weak guarantees for religion, or such a high rate of contribution for the taxpayer." The secondary law was passed, but a few weeks later, at the partial elections (in Belgium half the Chamber, which sits for four years as a full term, is re-elected at the end of two years), several Catholics, including Malou, recovered their seats, and the Liberal majority was reduced.

At this point in the struggle of parties it will be convenient to close this chapter, but before doing so reference must be made to the death of Queen Louise. For some time the Queen's health had caused anxiety, but she had been well enough to receive Queen Victoria and Prince Albert on the occasion of their visit to Ostend on 21st August, 1850. A month later she was not well enough to be present when the King laid the foundation-stone of the Column of the Congress in the Rue Royale on 25th September, 1850. The death of her father, the ex-King Louis Philippe, on 26th August, 1850, had profoundly affected her, and she gradually sank into a decline, from which no human aid availed to rally her. On 11th October "the good and much-beloved Queen Louise," as she was called, passed away amid the unqualified regret of the whole Belgian nation, to whom her virtues and her charity had endeared her. The address of condolence presented by the Chamber on this occasion to King Leopold says all that need be said here on the sad event:

"This profound emotion, which spread with the rapidity of lightning, this spontaneous interruption of commerce, these

garbs of mourning with which the people cover themselves, these prayers to Heaven, from all sides, the touching spectacle of a people weeping with its Prince—these are the testimonies of the public sentiment which speak louder than our words. The sentiments of a people so wisely and gratefully appreciative of the merits of the Crown must touch your afflicted heart. Hear in them the salutations to the blessings of that great and magnificent work of your reign—the triple foundation of a nationality, a Constitution, and a dynasty.”

Queen Louise left two sons and a daughter—Leopold, Duke of Brabant, now His Majesty King Leopold II., born 5th April, 1835 ; Philip, Count of Flanders, born 24th March, 1837, died 17th November, 1905 ; and Charlotte, ex-Empress of Mexico, born 7th June, 1840.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Growth of Party Politics.

THE elections of 1850, by somewhat diminishing the Liberal majority and increasing the number of the members sitting on the Opposition benches, led the Government to reflect that after all the Ministry of a Party is not a stable institution that can ignore the vagaries of a changing public opinion. The Government is the slave where the people is the master, and as Frère-Orban* surveyed the new Chamber he became less arrogant than in the full tide of the Liberal triumph in 1848-9, and, as one of his Catholic rivals remarked with a delicate sneer, "almost polite." He was the more polite because the financial position of the Government was full of embarrassment, and even peril.

One of Frère-Orban's proposals for meeting the deficit in the Budget had been the imposition of a tax on successions in the direct line which, up to this time, had escaped duty. A Bill to that effect had been brought forward, adjourned, and then defeated in the Senate. In 1852 it became necessary to make some fresh proposals, and the Finance Minister, an ardent Free-Trader, would listen to no scheme save one of direct taxation. While waiving the claim on direct successions, it was by an increased duty on other successions that Frère-Orban proposed to adjust his Budget. M. Malou opposed these proposals, declaring that the remedy lay rather in indirect taxation, and by his brilliant exposition of the financial situation he succeeded in bringing the Chamber round to his views.

* Frère-Orban, despite his Liberalism, had not been in favour of reducing the franchise in 1846 at the Liberal Congress. He said: "At the twenty florins you will have not electors, but servants." Two years later he belonged to the Government which adopted the new franchise.

M. Frère-Orban, despite the Liberal majority, was defeated, and forthwith resigned.

Some of the moderate Liberals distrusted the extreme tendencies of M. Frère-Orban. They also disapproved, on patriotic grounds, of his economies at the expense of the army. Those economies did more than arouse the disapprobation of King Leopold; they filled him with alarm, and a certain indignation at the blindness of mere politicians. His correspondence from 1850 to 1852 is full of vague apprehensions, and the causes of them possess as much force to-day as at the moment of the foundation of the Second Empire. Writing to M. Lebeau, whose loyal co-operation in the hour of peril at Liège in August, 1831, the King never forgot, on 28th September, 1850, he said :

“ I felt the need of recalling to your mind the past, and so proving to you that the recollection of your affectionate devotion and faithful courage in the midst of the dangers which menaced, and were even overwhelming us, *has remained graven on my memory*. The future may become very black again. It is scarcely possible that these complications should not be followed by more serious struggles, by wars. Politicians who love their country must not amuse themselves with illusions about these possibilities, which are probabilities. Nevertheless, we see tendencies towards sinking into a security which there is nothing to justify. There are ideas of a purely economical character which might result in the disorganisation of the country's means of defence.

“ This astonishes me the more as the least invasion of the country by foreign forces would cost it hundreds of millions ; but *what is still more precious, it might cost it its political existence*, for to believe that if it were once occupied by foreign forces those forces would evacuate it would be slipping wantonly into very strange illusions.

“ The meeting of the Chambers is not far off, and it is therefore necessary to pay serious attention to the prevention of an evil of which the results would be disastrous. 1831 must not be forgotten ! A country could not twice expose itself to such danger *without perishing*.

“ Be good enough to use your experience and enlightened patriotism to second me in the defence of the principles on which the existence of the country must always rest.”

In December, 1850, the King addressed M. Rogier on the same subject in a very remarkable letter :

“ Belgium, owing to its geographical position, is the most exposed country on earth. Where other countries have months for preparation she has but days. The fighting of June, 1848, might have exposed her to an immediate catastrophe ; in February, 1848, the peril was likewise great, but one could count on making a longer interior struggle. Belgium may be inundated, but if she be true to herself, she has very fine chances for resistance, and even of ulterior advantages, whilst if she be invaded and occupied, she will have to bear from enemies, and even friends, the infliction of burthens enormous and ruinous, and, I must add, perfectly well deserved, if they result from her own blindness. Another and very grave consideration is that concerning the spirit of the army. All countries without exception have turned their attention to raising the spirit and courage of those who were to be specially entrusted with the noble task of their defence. Belgium, on the contrary, not only does all she can to discourage her defenders in the present, but would also declare for several successive years that the same course shall be pursued. The country offers our youth only a small choice of careers : there is only the army to appeal to the imagination at all. If you show a determination to close this career also, what, think you, is to become of our youth ? I am quite impartial as to this grave question, which may compromise the country's future. I have never made of the army, as it is made in many countries, a personal amusement, in spite of the lively interest I take in military matters, but in it I see, as M. Thiers said to me a few months ago, the independence of Belgium. Without good means of defence you will be the sport of the whole world.”

With one other letter these royal warnings as to Belgium's true position, of which no one seemed so oblivious as Frère-Orban, may be closed. Writing on 21st January, 1851, to the same Minister, the King said :

“ The circumstances in which we find ourselves point to but one solution of the Ministerial difficulty, which is, that you should take charge in the interim of the portfolio of war. You know what my confidence in you is, and I am persuaded that the feeling of the country is in that respect the same. Without national security there is no political existence. All the most valuable interests, without any exception, are bound up with that security. The strongest guarantees must therefore be given to the country and the army that *we will defend the elements of this security* as our most precious treasure. I leave this trust in your courageous and devoted hands. The task, as I know, is laborious and difficult, but you will defend what is *the most important national interest*. I have sufficient faith in your devotion and character to lay upon you the accomplishment of a *duty sacred to us all*, and I beg you to undertake it.”

The defeat of Frère-Orban was brought about then by other and more important considerations than the proposals in his Budget. There was a sentiment in the breasts of the politicians of the older school, of the men who had passed through the ordeal of 1830-1, that intolerance was out of place in a country that had been made by mutual forbearance and the fusion of parties, and the intolerance of the doctrinaire was just as difficult to support as the intolerance of the cleric. The Rogier Ministry remained in power a little longer than its most aggressive member, but it was really doomed by the same chain of circumstances. A few months later it availed itself of the opportunity provided by an adverse vote on a minor question to resign. The King then cleverly secured a means of escape from his Parliamentary troubles by inviting a man who had held aloof from the war of parties to form an Administration of moderate politicians, who would carry on the Government without raising burning questions. This politician was Henri de Brouckère, brother of the Charles de Brouckère who had done so well in 1831 as War Minister. Henri de Brouckère, having been employed in a diplomatic capacity, had escaped being involved in the party strife and recriminations of 1847-51. The Ministry he formed secured an honourable truce which

was satisfactory to the whole country as well as to the King, alarmed by the uncertainty of events in France.

King Leopold's anxiety, of which sufficient proof has been furnished by the extracts from his correspondence, was largely caused by the situation in France. It was not merely that his own family had been dispossessed of power by the Revolution. Ended was the long and intimate correspondence with Louis Philippe, most voluminous and not the least graceful of letter-writers; gone past recall were the frequent visits to Paris and Compiègne and the interviews which transferred the settlement of State questions to the family circle, and in their place there were the unknown contingencies of a great political upheaval. And soon the situation became worse. The Revolution resolved itself into a triumvirate, the triumvirate into the presidency of Prince Louis Napoleon.

The Napoleonic legend was in itself a possible menace to Belgium, but there were other and more personal reasons for King Leopold's looking upon the new French ruler with some misgiving. In 1836, at the time of the Strasburg adventure, he had given an offensive description of Prince Louis in a private letter to his mother-in-law, Queen Marie Amélie, and this letter had been left behind when the Orleanists fled from Paris, and there was only too much reason to suppose that it had fallen into the hands of the new Dictator. King Leopold, repeating the loose gossip of the time, had therein called him "the son of Count Flahault," without any thought that this casual phrase in a private letter would ever influence affairs of State; but it was necessarily a matter of much anxiety whether this unfortunate remark would bias the policy of the President against Belgium. Moreover, King Leopold was quite convinced that Napoleon would not long remain content with any title short of that of Emperor. It is to Napoleon's credit that if he ever saw the letter he took no umbrage at it. There was some philosophic virtue in his character that made him indifferent to the slanders of society, or perhaps, as someone has said, he inherited Dutch phlegm on the paternal side.*

* Whoever Louis Napoleon's father was, it is not probable that it was Count Flahault (the father of the Duc de Morny). A far more likely story indicates that it may have been the Dutch General Janssens.

Even before the *coup d'état* of December, 1851, there had been just causes of anxiety with regard to the relations of the two countries. In 1849 the President had talked of sending his cousin, Pierre Bonaparte, to Brussels to represent the Republic. Pierre Bonaparte had even then the reputation of possessing a violent temper, which was verified in the Victor Noir affair more than twenty years later. He also posed as an ultra-Republican, and being known in Belgium to many people from his renting a shooting-box in the Ardennes, this proposal did not find favour at Brussels, where a safe man, and not a firebrand, was wanted as the representative of the neighbouring Republic. M. Firmin Rogier, who represented Belgium with great ability in Paris for thirty-three years, very cleverly succeeded in turning the French Foreign Office from this purpose. A more important and serious problem presented itself in regard to the prolongation of the treaty of commerce of 1845 between the two countries, which was due to expire in 1853. The inability of the Frère-Orban Ministry to deal successfully and speedily with this negotiation was one of the chief reasons of King Leopold's anxiety during the period of 1849-51.

If the relations between France and Belgium had been dubious during the existence of the Republic, they became so uncertain on Prince Napoleon's assumption of power by the *coup d'état* of 2nd December, 1851, that King Leopold sent a special envoy to Paris to get in touch with the new Dictator of France's destiny. This envoy, who was M. Henri de Brouckère, saw M. (afterwards the Duc) de Morny, Napoleon's ablest supporter, and made an exposition of Belgian policy, which satisfied that Minister that King Leopold, who had maintained correct and friendly relations with the Republic, would never allow Belgium to be made the base of Orleanist intrigues against the new French régime. He was instructed to say that "The King understands our system of liberty and hospitality not to mean that a man may stand in our garden to throw bombs into our neighbour's, or that we should tolerate from one who formerly belonged to the monarchist party what would be prevented in the case of a born revolutionist.



H.M. QUEEN MARIE HENRIETTE.

At the time of her Accession.



We have our system, but it is for home use only." These assurances were well received in Paris, and the President took an early opportunity of expressing his desire to maintain general peace, and to draw closer the bonds of friendship between France and Belgium.

The Belgian elections of June, 1852, went against the Liberals, and resulted in a large accession of strength to the Catholics. It was declared by the Liberal apologists that the reaction was due not merely to the example of France, but to the threats of several prominent Bonapartist writers, alleging that the Liberal régime in Belgium was a standing menace to the security of the new order of things in France.

The true explanation of the success of the Catholics was far simpler. The party, under the influence of M. Malou, had begun to organise and to provide a propaganda of its own. It was proved by the result that there was a strong Conservative party in the country, but as the Liberals, though divided themselves between moderates and extremists, were still in the majority, it was necessary to form the Ministry out of the centre, but still of the Liberal party. How happily the King solved this difficulty by calling M. de Brouckère from his diplomatic post has already been seen.

Two pressing questions presented themselves for decision. One was the commercial treaty with France, and the other the fixing of the strength of the Belgian army at an adequate figure and providing the necessary funds for its effective maintenance. Both these questions had been compromised by Frère-Orban. He had irritated the French Government by refusing to grant copyright protection to French literary and journalistic work. French writers saw their works pirated in Belgium with impunity, and they had no redress because the principles of Free Trade allowed no interference with the individual claim to manufacture what he liked even when he robbed. The same Minister had injured the army and imperilled the security of the country by cutting down the estimates to the lowest point, and by diverting two millions (francs) from the army to reduce third-class fares on the railways.

One of the first acts of the new Ministry, which we should call a Cabinet of affairs, was to effect an arrangement with France, prolonging the commercial treaty until a new definitive treaty could be concluded. Another measure was also instigated by the desire to conciliate French opinion. The press in Belgium was wholly free and unshackled except by the ordinary statute laws for the protection of individuals against slander; but this protection did not apply to the rulers of foreign States. They could be vilified with impunity. The somewhat adventurous career of the third Napoleon provided the unscrupulous or the unreflecting journalist with a fruitful theme, and at Paris the Imperial family, after the proclamation of the Second Empire, was somewhat sensitive. The ebullitions in the Belgian press threatened to compromise the good relations of the two countries, and to entail grave perils. King Leopold was most anxious for the elimination of this cause of trouble, and he hailed with lively satisfaction the passing of a law which put the rulers of foreign States on the same footing as private individuals. As M. Devaux very wisely said in supporting the measure: "To give foreign Governments the right to obtain justice in our courts is not a humiliation; rather is it paying a tribute to our own institutions." The measure was adopted by the Belgian Legislature in December, 1852, a few days after the proclamation of Napoleon III. as Emperor of the French.

The discussion of the vote for the army in the session of 1853 was preceded by the deliberations of a mixed Commission appointed by the personal efforts of the King to consider and report upon the military requirements of the country. The report brought out the facts that the military situation was not good, that the army was discouraged, and that a regular army of not less than 100,000 men was essential for the proper security of Belgium's independence and neutrality. M. Henri de Brouckère, supported by General Anoul, is entitled to the credit of carrying these proposals into effect. King Leopold took an active part in stimulating the action of his Ministers. "With less than 100,000 men we could not take the field," he said; and again, in words of pregnant wisdom: "We have to

spread the opinion that while Belgium, like any other country, may be invaded, it cannot be conquered without immense sacrifices." These words are as true to-day as when they were uttered, only, owing to the conversion of the old standing armies in France and Germany into armed nations, Belgium would now require half a million trained men to realise the ideal of Leopold, who aimed at making his neighbours think that "Belgium would be too difficult to take."

Writing from Vienna to M. de Brouckère on 17th May, 1853, to congratulate him on the passing of the Army Bill, the King said: "You with the Cabinet have obtained a triumph which must make you very happy, and which is for me the source of the greatest satisfaction. You have gained a Parliamentary battle which will contribute essentially to the security of the independence of Belgium, and which has produced an immense and very salutary impression abroad. Since 1848 Belgium has passed no Bill which does her more honour, and which will be better appreciated abroad."

King Leopold's visit to Vienna on this occasion was made in connection with an interesting event. In April, 1853, Prince Leopold, Duke of Brabant, heir-apparent to the Belgian throne, had reached his official majority, and celebrated it in the prescribed manner by taking his seat in the Senate. His reception in the Upper Chamber was flattering, his inaugural speech made a deep impression by its matter as well as the manner of delivery, and the country rejoiced in the knowledge it then acquired that, when Leopold I. should be called to his fathers, the destinies of Belgium would be entrusted to a Prince who was equal to the difficult task of carrying on the traditions of the Founder of Belgian independence.

In his desire to insure the security of his dynasty King Leopold looked about for a suitable alliance for his son, and, moved by personal as well as political considerations, he turned to Austria. The history of his family had been largely mixed up with the House of Hapsburg, and his brother was permanently domiciled within its dominions. Besides, the sentimental hold of the Hapsburgs, as the representatives of the Burgundian family, on the people of Belgium, counted

for something, and the union of the heir to the throne with a descendant of Mary of Burgundy could not fail to appeal to the loyal sentiments of the nation. The letter last quoted contained the notification of the betrothal of the Duke of Brabant and the Archduchess Marie Henriette, daughter of the Archduke Joseph, sometime Palatine of Hungary. The marriage was celebrated with great ceremony and magnificence at Brussels in the following August.*

The outbreak of political trouble in the Near East, which after several years' diplomatic strife resulted in the Crimean War, simply because the Emperor Nicholas, like his kinsman, William of the Netherlands, twenty-four years earlier, refused to believe that England and France would act together, made King Leopold exceedingly desirous of improving his relations with the Emperor Napoleon. He wished to deprive the newest of Europe's rulers of all excuse for intermeddling in Belgian affairs, or of seeking compensation in her direction.

Napoleon had proclaimed that the Empire meant peace, but King Leopold shrewdly suspected that a régime which derived its strength from the army would sooner or later go to war. Whilst his Ministers were constantly squabbling over party questions, the King was beset with constant anxiety lest the Imperial ambition should turn in the direction of Belgium. The outbreak of the war with Russia somewhat relieved this tension by giving the Emperor Napoleon employment, and, moreover, it could not be doubted that the co-operation of England and France in a great joint undertaking was in itself a guarantee that Belgium would not be molested.

But the conclusion of peace brought with it a revival of anxiety. The Belgian Constitution made it the freest country in Europe outside England. This very freedom was in itself a reflection on the systems in the neighbouring States. It became almost a menace when it was converted into a shield for those who had offended their rulers. The law of 1833 had

* The events of this year were celebrated by several important improvements in the city of Brussels, of which Charles de Brouckère was at the time Burgomaster. The Quartier Leopold was added to the town, and formally opened by the King on his son's birthday. On the same occasion he laid the foundation-stone of the works connected with the new water-supply of Brussels from the Forest of Soignes.

proudly declared that fugitives seeking refuge in Belgium for treason or political affairs should not be extradited. It is a proud privilege to claim, but it becomes a source of danger to the State asserting it when the protecting power is weak, and it possesses a frontier that is easily vulnerable. This truth was forced upon the Belgian Government early in 1856. Two men implicated in a plot to assassinate the Emperor took shelter in Belgium. Their extradition was demanded and refused. The French Government became angry, and made representations to the effect that it could not tolerate the continuance of a practice that was distinctly unfriendly towards a neighbour. The King became alarmed, and induced his Ministers, while upholding the existing law in the case of the individuals mentioned, to bring in a new measure assimilating political to the ordinary cases, for which extradition was granted. After much opposition it was passed into law, much to the relief of King Leopold, who wrote that "the question was of high importance."

There was another incident with France about this time that threatened to cause unpleasantness, if not worse, with Belgium. The freedom of the press inscribed on the roll of the Constitution had been somewhat tempered by the Act allowing foreign Governments to take action in the Belgian courts, but, short of personal slander, a wide range was left for the invective of Brussels journalists in judging foreign Governments. The Second Empire afforded a promising theme to these champions of human equality; besides, it was the subject nearest and most interesting to their readers. Press indiscretions were a source of constant worry to King Leopold. He wrote about this time: "In countries where the press leads public opinion astray the greatest wildness must be expected." These indiscretions were committed at this period chiefly at the expense of France. But even the King was unprepared for the exact form in which French resentment revealed itself.

The Congress was sitting in Paris for the regulation of the affairs of the Near East. At the sitting of 8th April, 1856, Count Cavour, the Piedmontese representative, got up and

called for the suppression of the attacks on the French Government in the Belgian press, and went on to call Belgium "that nest of demagogues." The French Plenipotentiary, Count Walewski, emphasised this attack by declaring that "Every day there are printed in Belgian publications the most insulting and the most hostile attacks upon France and her Government, and in them even revolt and assassination are openly advocated."

The speaker also referred to the fact that a secret political society known as "La Marianne," which existed in France for the purpose of assassinating the Emperor and deposing the Imperial Government, was loudly extolled in the same prints. The Congress, whether to show its sympathy with France or because it was shocked by some of the comments in the Belgian papers, passed a resolution inserted in its order of the day to the effect that "all the Powers, even those who held to the principle of liberty of the press, did not hesitate to denounce strongly the excesses of Belgian papers, and to recognise the necessity of remedying the real inconvenience resulting from the frenzied license of which such a great abuse has been made in Belgium."

This censure made a great stir in Belgium, and placed the Government in a very embarrassing position. Whilst on the one hand it had no sympathy whatever with the offending journals, it saw that it could not yield any more to outside pressure without incurring defeat in the Chamber, and an outcry in the country of which the issue could not be foreseen. Two concessions had already been made to France, but the press could not be gagged to please any foreign potentate. Freedom of the press was inscribed in the Constitution, and when a Liberal asked, on 7th May, whether it was proposed to alter the Constitution and received a negative answer, he went on to ask the pointed question, "But if a foreign Government should insist?" The Minister of Foreign Affairs replied, amidst the applause of the Chamber, with the single word, "Never!" Some weeks later Lord Palmerston took occasion to utter some words of encouragement to the effect that Belgium should not be coerced on account of its press.

We must now turn to the questions of purely domestic policy which brought about the resignation of M. de Brouckère's Ministry. Although this Minister was most careful to avoid all controversial matters which should bring rival parties in the Chamber into sharp conflict, he could not evade the question left over from 1850 in regard to secondary education. A promise of further legislation was inscribed in the King's Speech.

Despite several attempts from the time of Rogier's first plan in 1834, several essential parts of the question still remained unsettled. The last proposals had been embodied in Rogier's project of 1850, of which the salient feature had been to make religious teaching optional instead of compulsory. This Bill, truncated of its original religious clause, passed into law at the end of 1850, and its main provisions were carried into effect. But the religious clause demanded not merely interpretation, but some clear instructions as to how it should be applied, and until they were formulated it remained dormant and non-effective.

The clause in question read: "Secondary instruction includes religious teaching in the establishments subject to the regulations of the present law." It was necessary to come to an accord with the Bishops as representing the Catholic Church in Belgium. The Bill of 1850 was very far from perfection, but the vagueness of the religious clause was its salient defect and vice. Religion was to be taught, but by whom, in what manner, and under what conditions, was left undecided, and to the solution of chance. Without guarantees the nominal concession might easily become meaningless. A rabid doctrinaire professor might simply make the visits of the cleric who came to impart religious instruction to his class so uncomfortable, and accompanied by such undignified conditions, that no self-respecting priest would subscribe to them. Cases of this sort actually happened at Ghent and Brussels, where the free Universities were centres of great political activity in support of the Liberals. The consequence was that the Catholics, under the orders of their Bishops and priests, abstained from sending their sons to the State academies and schools, with the result that their utility became compromised. It

could not but be a serious reflection on the work of the State that the teachers it supplied should have only half-empty benches to instruct. Pending the solution of the religious question, then, the law of 1850 remained a striking testimony to the weakness or limited power of the Government.

The vague terms of the mode of religious teaching to be adopted at the secondary schools did not apply to that at the primary with regard to which the law of 1842 was formal and precise. The advanced section of the Rogier-Frère party had, indeed, demanded that they should be assimilated, but this pretension had been repulsed. M. de Brouckère began his task by declaring that the law of 1842 would remain unchanged. At the same time he expressed his intention of enforcing the law of 1850 in its literal sense—that is to say, with the minimum of religious instruction. This intention had to be modified in view of the growing confidence and opposition of the Catholic party, no longer a small minority, but a solid phalanx almost equal in numbers to the Left, and led by able chiefs.

M. Malou shone in particular during these discussions. In words which might have been used with equal application to the Education Bill of 1907 and 1908 in our own House of Commons he said: "If the believers in the creeds other than the Church (*i.e.*, Rome)—the Protestants, the Jews, the Mahomedans—were to come together to discuss with the Catholics the question of religious instruction, I am convinced that they would at once come to an accord, because the view of all of them would be that teaching at all stages cannot be separated from moral and religious education. It is the common bond between them, the uniform tendency of all positive religions. . . . I have said before there can be no Belgium without the religious sentiment."

Malou's speeches and those of others of the same party produced a great impression. They also held out the olive-branch. They said in effect: We do not ask you to repeal your Act of 1850, but to agree with the Church as to the working of one of its clauses. M. de Brouckère gave way. Instead of enforcing the narrow view, he entered upon negotiations with the Bishops, and became a party to the Antwerp Con-

vention. The cardinal point of this arrangement was that the teaching of religion should be given in accordance with the terms of a Convention agreed upon for the Diocese of Antwerp, and that in each diocese a similar arrangement should be brought into effect, as occasions arose, by a formal agreement between the episcopal and secular authorities. Among these provisions was religious teaching by a priest or other nominee of the Bishop for two hours a week to each class, non-Catholics being exempted from attendance. The books of instruction were to be selected by the ecclesiastical authority, and no books subversive of religion were to be used in any class. There were also provisions for attending Mass, and some minor concessions to the views of the Church. The Chamber ratified the arrangement in February, 1854, by an overwhelming majority. Frère-Orban and seven other extremists opposed the arrangement, and in the moment of defeat Frère-Orban exclaimed: "Down with the convents!"

In June, 1854, a General Election was held in Belgium. By the Constitution the Chamber exists for four years, half the Chamber and Senate having to retire for re-election at the end of two years. The result of the elections was that the Catholic party was returned, for the first time in Belgian history, with a clear majority. When M. de Brouckère took office he had declared that he would resign when either side of the Chamber—the Left or the Right—possessed a clear majority. The Right had attained this position, but it was thought advisable to leave the Ministry in power which had done so well in the task of general conciliation. The King was especially desirous to retain his advisers, and the Catholics were in no hurry to grasp the reins of power. The King, having obtained two years of Parliamentary calm by his happy selection of M. de Brouckère, wished to have the time to look round and discover some equally happy selection for its prolongation after the retirement of the existing Ministry. In March, 1855, however, M. de Brouckère, having accomplished his mission to the admiration of all parties, resigned, and the King found his successor in M. Pierre de Decker. M. de Decker was a Catholic of moderate views and sound good sense. He

gathered round him a band of Ministers of the same views—men of good ability, high character, and free from party passion. It was a Cabinet approximating to the old Unionist party, and King Leopold declared it to be “one after his own heart.”

M. de Decker's views may be gathered from the following passage, from a speech made in 1845, at the time of the first manifestation of party differences :

“At the dawn of our national independence there appeared this luminous and faithful principle, this principle of justice and of strength, to which we so happily attached our most glorious memories and our dearest interests—Union. It is in putting this principle in relief on all occasions, it is by rehabilitating it, by glorifying it unceasingly, by maintaining it against all assaults of an exclusive spirit, that the Government must seek its principal power and its most solid glory. It is in it also that Belgium must find the conditions of its preservation and its progress.”

These wise words, so often lost sight of by Belgian politicians, who are all for their party rather than the State, are almost as applicable to-day as when they were spoken. They animated all the men who associated themselves with M. de Decker. The portfolio of Foreign Affairs was entrusted to Viscount Charles Vilain XIII., who had taken an honourable part in the negotiations of 1831-9; of Justice to Alphonse Nothomb, the brother of the former Minister; of Finance to M. Mercier; of Public Works to M. Dumon; and of War to General Greindl. M. Malou gave the Ministry the support of his authority and influence. On the other hand, the Liberals revealed a greater hostility to the attempt to revive Unionism than they had displayed towards the Catholics. The moderate Ministry of M. de Decker was destined to encounter the full force of party acrimony and passion, but, although some of the incidents occurred before the national celebrations of July, 1856, it will be well to treat them as a whole in the succeeding chapter.

We may turn, in concluding this, from party politics to a subject of national interest. Twenty-five years had elapsed since King Leopold entered Brussels, and it was proposed by

M. de Decker to the Chamber that the most appropriate way of celebrating the event would be by repeating as far as possible the ceremony of the original inauguration on its twenty-fifth anniversary, 21st July, 1856. The proposal, accepted by the Legislature, was one thoroughly in accordance with the spirit and tastes of the Belgian people generally and the good citizens of Brussels in particular. An historical procession, bringing back the glories of the past, is the ideal celebration to the minds of Flemings and Walloons. But something more than a resemblance to historical truth was to be the feature on this occasion. The very men, or most of them, who had taken part in the original event were to participate in the repetition, and the younger generation was to acclaim the fruition of the work which their elders had seen commenced a quarter of a century before.

As far as possible the procession followed its original course, and the ceremonies were identical. The King rode on horseback, as in 1831, this time accompanied by his two sons, also on horseback. He was received at a triumphal archway erected on the site of the old Laeken Gate by the city magistrates, and again the keys of the old Brabant capital were placed in his hands. Through crowded streets, loudly cheered, the King passed down the long Rue Royale to the square in front of St. Jacques sur Caudenberg, where he had mounted the new throne of Belgium on his first arrival. Here all that Belgium possessed in the way of distinction was present—representatives of her ancient nobility, the high ecclesiastics of her Church, national, not by law, but by the fact that it was the only Church of the people; the two legislative Chambers; but the smallest group of all was the most interesting.

This was composed of the survivors of the National Congress, headed by the same Baron de Gerlache who had administered the oath to the King before he ascended the throne. The incidents of such a day were necessarily moving, but King Leopold seemed most affected by the sight of these men. They had been associated together in the hour of danger when Belgium was little more than a geographical expression, and now that she was made a Kingdom, and firmly established, it was only

natural that all the troubles and perils and anxieties through which they had passed together should flock upon the mind. King Leopold, turning to his sons, pointed out these men as the makers of Belgium, and then gravely saluted the group by raising his hat.

M. de Gerlache then delivered the following speech :

Sire, twenty-five years ago, in this very place, on this very day, the Belgian Congress, in the name of the nation, took of your Majesty the oath "to observe the Constitution and the laws of the Belgian people, and to maintain the national independence." They who were then witnesses of this solemn undertaking come hither to-day to affirm, in the face of Heaven, that your Majesty has performed all those promises and surpassed all our hopes. And the nation, one and all, sire, comes hither to join in our affirmation. It comes to bear witness that, during these twenty-five years of sovereignty, its King has never violated a single one of its laws, lifted a finger against a single one of its liberties, or given legitimate cause of complaint to a single one of its fellow-citizens. Here all dissensions disappear, here we are all of one accord ; we have all but one and the same heart in which to enshrine one common love for our King and our fatherland !

Amidst the commotions which have shaken so many Governments, Belgium has remained faithful to her Prince and the institutions she created for herself. This sort of phenomenon, rare as it is in our age, can be explained only by the happy harmony existing between King and people, cemented by their common respect for sworn faith and for the national Constitution. A Constitution which satisfies a people greedy of liberty, and so deeply in love with it as to bear it with all its inevitable inconveniences ; an intelligent, religious, and moral people, who, remembering the past, ask only that they may live in peace under the protection of their own laws ; a Prince, so wise, so able, so full of conciliation, that amidst divergence of opinion he has been able to win the esteem and respect of all, both in Belgium and abroad—such, sire, is the concurrence of providential circumstances which has preserved and consolidated this new State, and which has rendered it peaceful, prosperous, and, we dare to hope (and it is our dearest wish), stable for ever and ever !

History, sire, some day, after recalling our ancient national glories, will have some brilliant pages to dedicate to the foundation of this Kingdom and to the reign of Leopold I., a reign so much the more fertile in instruction, in that God, whilst visibly protecting Belgium, has not spared her her days of trial.

It is for history to recall to mind what we may be barely permitted to allude to here ; it is for history to speak of the impetus given to mental activity in all careers, science, arts, and literature, and of the rapid development of industry which has caused a transformation, so to speak, in this nation whose restoration to itself dates back scarcely a quarter of a century.

Sire, the members of the National Congress are deeply moved and touched by the delicate and kindly feeling which has brought you again to this very spot where we received your Majesty so long ago, in the midst of that old band of ardent, devoted, and courageous patriots who laid the first foundations of our social fabric, who made Belgium what we see it, and who instituted the assemblies and the powers which govern it.

Your presence here, sire, recalls to us the memory of that great day of July, 1831, to which no demonstration could do justice, when hearts overflowing with joy and hope hailed in Leopold I. the dawning of a new Belgium, at last awakened after two long centuries of slumbering under the dominion of the foreigner. The same acclamations await him to-day in every one of our towns, for the idea of this festival is entirely popular ; yes, indeed, sire, it is

the voice of the whole people who feel the need of expressing their gratitude to him, who, under God, has most contributed to render them happy.

It only remains for us now, sire, to give thanks in the country's name to Heaven, praying at the same time for the prolongation for years to come of your Majesty's precious life and glorious reign, that you may more and more assure our country's future, and serve as counsellor, example, and guide to those young Princes, genuine children of Belgium who will be one day called upon to continue the wise and noble traditions of the great reign of Leopold I.

To this speech the King made a brief reply :

Gentlemen, I cannot leave you without expressing to you how greatly I have ever appreciated the labours of the National Congress. This illustrious assembly abundantly represented the nation, all its feelings, and all its interests. It was surrounded not only by difficulties, but by actual dangers, and in spite of all it never tripped. It understood what was required to make the country happy. It never suffered itself to be turned aside by any intrigue, by any threat. You, gentlemen, laid the foundation of a work which we are carrying out to completion, and you gave the country the courage needed to carry the work to a successful issue. And for this I cherish in my heart of hearts a feeling of the liveliest gratitude, and, I repeat, I have ever appreciated the wisdom and talent of this assembly, numerous as it was, which gave Europe a beautiful example, which, I dare to say, has not been much followed. I thank you, Mr. President, for the sentiments you have just expressed to me in the name of the members of the Congress. It is a happiness to me, gentlemen, to see so many of you still after so many years.

King Leopold's principal speech was drafted in collaboration with his Ministers, and addressed to the deputations from the two Chambers. It read as follows :

MR. PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE,

MR. PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES,

I am deeply moved by the noble sentiments you have just expressed to me in language so affectionate and at the same time so elevated.

I think I may recall, on this solemn occasion, some passages of the speech of July 21, 1831.

"I only accepted the crown you offered me with a view of fulfilling a task as noble as it is useful, that of being called to consolidate the institutions of a generous people, and to maintain its independence.

"My heart knows no other ambition but that of seeing you happy."

The accomplishment of this great mission encountered numerous difficulties.

The independence—acquired but yesterday—of this good people lay as a problem before Europe, distrustful and disquieted. Its free institutions, founded independently of all intervention of royalty, had not yet been able to receive the sanction of experience. Its improvised administration was awaiting the reform of its organic laws. Minds were divided by opinions proceeding from passion, and influences proceeding from jealousy. Material interests, abruptly disturbed, were in alarm about the future.

Soon, thanks to the good feeling of the country, order and unity appeared in the midst of this momentary confusion ; to doubt and disquietude succeeded confidence and security. Inwardly strengthened by the organization of its divers administrations, and by the foundation of a national dynasty, the country emerged from its fatal isolation, and saw its independence guaranteed by the most solemn treaties. An intelligent activity was impressed upon works of public utility. The existence of an army, strong by means of training

and discipline, was assured. The constitutional institution of the Civic Guard became its useful auxiliary for the maintenance of order and for the defence of the country. The springs of public prosperity were reopened. Commerce and industry were developed with a rapidity which bordered on the prodigious, and that ancient industry of the country—agriculture—followed up this movement with wise improvements. Letters, science, and the arts shone as in the brightest days of our history. Belgium felt she was alive.

Our nationality lacked yet one trial. There burst out a crisis, profound and universal, but in this very crisis Belgium contrived to find new strength, to give new proofs of vitality, to acquire new claims to general esteem.

I like to trace to the nation itself the honour of a privileged position which seems to defy the boldness of our hopes.

The old morality of the Belgian populations, their profound sentiments of duty, their good sense, their practical spirit, and their deference for the paternal views of their King, all these qualities united powerfully contributed towards making them avoid the danger of inveiglement and excess, and to make them understand instinctively the true conditions of our political existence.

Gentlemen, since 1830 Belgium has contrived, in her moral as well as her material course, to accomplish the work of a whole century. There remains for us a duty to fulfil ; it is to follow out and finish, in the same spirit which inspired its beginnings, the work of its still young but brilliant civilisation.

As for the past, union was our strength in the days of triumph of our nationality as well as in the days of the trials in which it was steeped but to gain fresh vigour. As for the future, still in union lies the secret of our prosperity, our greatness, and our duration.

Let us seal afresh the alliance between the nation and the dynasty of its choice. Let us concentrate the union of all members of the great Belgian family in one common feeling of devotion towards our beautiful country. Let us bow down before Divine Providence, which holds in its hands the destinies of nations, and which, in its inscrutable wisdom, has called away a beloved Queen whose absence can alone render imperfect the rejoicings on this memorable day.

The most interesting passage in this speech, as prepared by M. de Decker, was omitted by the King from a sense of modesty. It deserves to be preserved, because it tersely sums up King Leopold's work in and for Belgium, and here is the most appropriate place to give it :

" I dare bear witness of myself that I had the happiness to understand my people. I respected its creeds and its traditions ; I defended its rights and interests. As mediator between Belgium and Europe, I had the tact to gain for my Government an honourable place in the councils of the nations and to gather about the Belgian name universal and deserved sympathies. As mediator between all Belgians I left the nation to develop in freedom all its vigorous powers, only striving amidst its peaceful contests constantly to elucidate the true feelings of the nation. In a word, I was true to the engagements I undertook in 1831. Belgian as I was by your adoption, I made it a law to myself to be so always in my policy."

It seems probable that this public celebration of his twenty-five years of sovereign rule in Belgium, accompanied as it was by unmistakable tokens of popular rejoicing and gratitude, formed the happiest incident in King Leopold's life. It brought home to him the fact that the nation had not been blind to what he had done for it, and revealed in a manner beyond dispute that it appreciated what he had accomplished. Sometimes, amid the wrangles of parties, it may have seemed to him that he was being treated as of little or no account, and that he had to deal with men who thought Belgium had made itself, and that he had contributed nothing to the edifice. He was left the choice of a still more disagreeable alternative : that what he had done was treated as a matter of course, assigned to oblivion, and refused the meed of the commonest gratitude.

On 21st July, 1856, he was told, with a warmth of expression which excluded the idea of mere courtesy or well-simulated deceit, that, whatever the Frère-Orbans and the Verhaegens might say, the Belgian peoples saw in King Leopold the real architect of their fortunes and the skilful pilot who had guided the ship of State through so many perils. The Flemings and the Walloons have some curious points of resemblance. In their calmer moods they reveal the Northern phlegm, which makes them seem indifferent and stoical. But when this calm exterior disappears before some emotion or passion there is no Southern race that can be more exuberant or impetuous. The sweep of their emotions runs the whole gamut of human ecstasy and fervour, and for the moment ancient Gaul gives place in the mind to Italy and Spain. The people of Brussels celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of their King's accession in the old historic style by going mad for three days. Thus had they treated Wenceslas and Philip the Good, Charles V., and Albert and Isabella, and Charles of Lorraine, and so testified they in the middle of the 19th century to the merit of King Leopold. It was the best guerdon King Leopold would have asked for, because it could not be bought, and the tribute of a nation far exceeds in value that of any single statesman or even of a Chamber of Deputies.

CHAPTER XV.

Catholics and Liberals.

THE Convention of Antwerp, while it temporarily adjusted the differences between the Government and the episcopate on the question of religious teaching in the secondary schools, accomplished nothing towards closing the wide gulf that separated Catholics and Liberals. The more advanced section of the Liberals were either avowed free-thinkers or so bitterly opposed to the Church that all their efforts were directed to its humiliation. On the other hand, the Catholic hierarchy, alarmed by what had already happened, and attacked in its most cherished possessions, clung tenaciously to what it retained, and would not yield an inch for fear of losing more. The Antwerp Convention, in addition to securing the effective teaching of religion, had provided that irreligion and avowed heterodoxy were not to be taught or tolerated in the schools. Similar guarantees existed by law for the institutions of higher and primary education supported by the State.

Early in 1856 the Belgian Chamber was agitated by the question of the teaching given by one of the professors at Ghent University, who was alleged to have denied in his lectures the divinity of Jesus Christ. As this University was one of the two subsidised by the State, M. de Decker was called upon to state whether he would tolerate such blasphemy. The Minister replied that if it were proved that the professor had done what was alleged he should be dismissed from his post within twenty-four hours. But he went on to say : " I do not wish by a narrow intolerance to prevent professors in the State Universities from entering upon those large and fruitful discussions which are the life of the higher education. There are

no fixed principles that can be made use of in dealing with this branch of administration. As a Catholic, the statements attributed to the professor are repugnant to me, but the Government is constitutionally responsible to the Chambers and the country for its decisions."

The caution of the Minister did not meet with the approval of the Bishops, and the Pope intervened with a Brief, dated 8th April, 1856, calling upon them to redouble their vigilance and efforts to arrest the spreading of "the frightful pest" of religious disbelief. M. de Decker, however, could not be induced to do more than address a circular to the heads of the Universities at Ghent and Liège, inviting them to recommend the professors "to abstain in their teaching from all direct attack upon the essential principles of the creeds practised in Belgium." But this did not satisfy the Bishops of Ghent and Bruges, who issued an admonition to Catholic parents against sending their sons to the Universities of either Ghent or Brussels, as the fundamental principle of the Christian religion was assailed secretly in the one and openly in the other.

This discussion, which occupied a good deal of the Chambers' time and attention until the close of the year 1856, was the precursor of the most violent contention between the two parties which occurred during the reign of Leopold I.—a contention so violent that it gave rise at one moment to fears of revolution.

M. de Decker had inherited from his predecessors as a sort of *damnosa hæreditas* the obligation of dealing with the question of charitable bequests, and in an evil hour for himself and his party he decided to bring in a Bill on the subject. The question of charitable bequests and foundations has been mentioned already, but it may be interesting to present a brief survey of the whole question as it had risen up in the course of centuries in Belgium. Until the advent of modern philanthropists about the middle of the 19th century—a genus produced by the growth and accumulation of capital—religion was the sole inspiring cause of charitable bequests, and even when the bequest was specifically assigned for educational purposes, religion still formed its basis.

In the old days, when Belgium was Spanish or Austrian, the bequests of the testator were scrupulously respected, and, as a rule, their execution was left to the Church. The French Revolution, on extending its conquest to Belgium, absorbed all these funds, and assigned the relief of distress and the distribution of charity to a central department in Brussels. This did not work at all well, and within two years the Republic altered its system, resigning the work to the communes, and leaving to their management the old trusts, or such of them as still existed. At the same time it placed no restrictions whatever on the freedom of individual bequests for the future. The Dutch Government introduced no innovations in this matter, and this system may be said to have existed undisturbed down to 1849. During the first eighteen years, then, of King Leopold's reign charitable bequests were carried out by the executors nominated by the testators themselves. In other words, complete individual liberty and tolerance on the part of the Government prevailed.

In 1849 a new principle was introduced. The State nominally took over the control and dispensation of these bequests. By a simple process of invalidating the nomination of executors or trustees it assigned the task to the public departments. This new arrangement, which was administrative rather than legal, constituted a usurpation of individual rights that could not be upheld in theory in a free country, and, moreover, the Judges declared that they did not know how to enforce it in practice. In 1851 the Cour de Cassation—the highest tribunal in the State, being charged with the revision of all judgments—went so far as to give a decision recognising the appointment of special trustees in accordance with the will of a testator, thus nullifying the decrees of the Government.

Under these circumstances a new and clear law on the subject seemed imperative. M. de Brouckère's Ministry had attempted to deal with the matter, but its proposals had satisfied nobody, and before they could be adapted to the situation the Ministry had retired. The task of drafting the new Bill was entrusted to M. Alphonse Nothomb, the Minister

of Justice, who was assisted, however, by the report prepared by a committee of the central section presided over by M. Malou. The fundamental principle of this Bill was to restore to some extent the individual rights of the testator. He was to have the right of naming as trustees members of his family, or representatives of the Church, subject to the acceptance of the bequest by the King in consultation with the Office of Beneficence. In cases where the land or buildings exceeded in value the requirements of the trust they were to be sold. The Bill provided also for strict administrative control, and left it open to the Courts to intervene whenever they deemed it necessary to do so. This Bill, which was in reality equally moderate and practical, proposed to revert to the state of things prior to 1849, with the addition of stronger guarantees for State control and supervision. In ordinary times there is no reason for doubting that it would have been accepted by the Chamber and quickly passed into law. The stormy conflict which now arose was not due to the defects of the Bill, but to the determination of the Liberal Party, led by Frère-Orban, to make it the means of their return to power by appealing to the ignorant passions of the masses, and raising the cry of "Down with the convents !"

Before describing the virulent attack to which this measure was exposed by the so-called Liberal Party it may be as well to bring out as clearly as possible the extreme moderation and broad-mindedness of M. de Decker. He was no more of a religious fanatic than the leader of the doctrinaires. He set forth his political faith in the following words : " Belgium is a country of extreme liberty. She needs, therefore, as a counterpoise, the principle of authority. But it is the religious character of the Belgians which, sealing the alliance of liberty with order, rendered the régime of a Constitution, which few nations would be capable of supporting, of advantage to our country. Our own history tells us that religious liberty is always the first attacked, and also that it is never left the only one attacked. What does it matter, after all, by whom we are governed, or whether they be Catholics or Liberals, provided that we are governed with prudence and moderation ?

What matters it who is in power provided that those who are show themselves just in their intentions, great in their acts, national in their policy, and guarantee to all citizens without distinction the benefits of those constitutional liberties which it is their duty to preserve by a just and loyal application? Thus, I do not ask for the Catholic party, to which I have the honour to belong, the possession of power. The guarantee of its liberty and dignity alone occupies my thoughts!"

At another time the moderation of these views, publicly expressed at the moment of accepting office, would have secured a reasonable hearing for the measures proposed by such a Minister, but the Liberals, irritated by the loss of power at the very moment when they thought they had so perfected their organisation as to make defeat impossible, resolved to turn the opportunity that now presented itself to the attainment of their own party ends. Their tactics were equally unscrupulous and forcible. The Bill which, if any discretion at all was to be left to testators, was remarkable for its moderation and for the safeguards it put in the hands of the Government, was denounced as an attempt to revive mortmain, to enrich the Church, and rob the people. Countless pamphlets, numberless articles in the press, were devoted to the task of proving this view, and of stirring up public opinion. Frère-Orban became a pamphleteer for the nonce; even M. Lebeau emerged from his semi-retirement to attack M. Malou and M. Nothomb, and the leading organ of the party declared: "The religious corporations invested with immense properties by individuals; the patrimony of the poor exposed to a thousand dangers which it will be impossible to prevent; the right to confer the civil status, implicitly abandoned to the Government, on all convents for women; the transformation into religious congregations of all charitable institutions—that is what in the time to come will be the fruit of the detestable system which a blind and oppressive majority are attempting to impose triumphantly upon us."

The country became alarmed at this astutely conjured-up prospect of the revival of Church power, and even some moderate Catholics began to have misgivings as to the effect

of the measure. Public opinion grew more and more excited, and no one troubled themselves to study what the Bill contained, having lost the sense of criticism in that of blind denunciation. This popular effervescence did not at first disturb the serenity of the Chamber in which the Catholics had a sure majority or the confidence of the Government. The debate on the Bill commenced on 21st April, 1857, and filled twenty-seven sittings. M. Malou distinguished himself during the debate by the address with which he parried the thrusts of his opponents, and by the clearness and brevity with which he expounded the principles of the Bill. Even his opponents were compelled to pay a tribute to his eloquence and ability. On the other hand, M. Frère-Orban preferred to ignore the clauses of the Bill, and to concentrate his efforts on exciting the country. Even when addressing the Chamber, his speeches were really harangues to the populace outside. He declared in one of them: "Establish the principle of this Bill, and you will have given the country a legal, legitimate, unanimous, invincible rallying-cry, 'Down with the convents!'" As the principle of the Bill was merely to leave the wishes of individuals intact and to respect the bequests of testators, it is rather difficult to follow the argument of the Liberal leader, or to assent to his proposition that the Charity Bill would have revived the worst evils of mortmain. But of his astuteness in providing his party with an effective battle-cry in "Down with the convents!" there can be no question.

Long before the debate concluded there had been popular demonstrations in the public gallery of the Chamber against the Government. When the galleries were cleared the demonstrators paraded the streets in increased numbers, and responsible politicians used the threat of mob-law by talking of going into the streets (*descendre dans la rue*, which is the French phrase for a revolution). These scenes did not alter, however, the simple fact that the Government possessed a majority in the Chamber. On 27th May, the closure having been enforced, the Bill was carried by 60 votes to 41. A crowd of 5,000 persons, assembled outside the building, on hearing the result, at once began an uproar. When the Ministers

appeared they were hissed, the Papal nuncio was insulted, and then the crowd moved off to attack the office of the principal Catholic newspaper, the *Emancipation*. They smashed the windows here, and also those of the convents they passed *en route*. Not satisfied with this, they proceeded to make a demonstration outside the private residence of its proprietor and editor, M. Coomans. An unfortunate incident marked this visit. One of M. Coomans' children, alarmed at the sight of the shouting crowd, fell or jumped out of an upper story window into the garden. The child was not hurt, but his mother died shortly afterwards from the effects of the shock she then received.

No attempt was made by the police or by the civil power, which might well have called out the Garde Civique, to repress this lawlessness, and even when the windows were broken at M. Malou's residence, no steps were taken to restore order. The Duke and Duchess of Brabant attended the theatre the same evening, and were spectators of an outrageous and organised demonstration, in which cries of "Down with the convents!" "Down with the Ministry!" "We will hang Malou!" alternated with semi-ironical shouts of "Long live the King!" and "Long live the Prince!" These demonstrations were disquieting. It was so well known that they were organised by those desirous of succeeding to power that the public gave the agitation the name of "The rising of the kid-gloved."

Although the Bill had been voted in principle, only three of its Articles had been formally adopted on the 28th, when the King, becoming alarmed at the continuance of the popular demonstrations, summoned a Council of Ministers for the evening of that day at the Brussels Palace. There had been an unfortunate disagreement during the day's sitting between M. Malou and M. Nothomb as to the interpretation to be placed on the paragraph relating to the foundations for primary free schools, and the rumours of further disturbances in the provinces showed that, unless nipped in the bud, real peril might ensue. King Leopold was very indignant at the scenes of disorder which the capital had witnessed. He considered



M. JULES MALOU.



that the good name of Belgium would be seriously compromised, and he was in favour of the sternest measures being taken to put an end to the disorders. He rode in from Laeken, and was received at several points on the route with a noisy ovation, at which he did not hesitate to display his marked displeasure.

It was in no calm or pacific mood that he met his Ministers, to whom M. Malou, as reporter on the Bill, was added. He was prepared to sanction the strongest measures. Troops had been summoned from different garrisons, and he would not have hesitated to proclaim a state of siege if his responsible advisers had recommended it. But his Ministers had nothing to suggest. They were not solidly in agreement on all the provisions of the Bill, neither were they, however excellent in general respects, men of action. To tell the plain truth, they were a little cowed by the popular outbreak. But King Leopold shared none of their fears. The possibility of opposition only strengthened his own resolution. With the keen eye of an experienced soldier, he reckoned up the chances, and he saw that a prompt move would put an end to the spreading lawlessness without much risk or trouble. His first words to the Council were almost a battle-cry: "I will mount my horse if necessary to protect the national representatives. I will not allow the majority to be outraged. This is the death of the Parliamentary régime. You understand that, gentlemen! The Parliamentary régime is ended to-day; the Constitution is violated. I have kept my oath for twenty-six years. I have just been relieved of it; let them not forget it!"

But none of the Ministers rose to the occasion. The King's courage and confidence inspired them with no similar qualities. They had not even a suggestion to make as to how to deal with the future of the Bill itself. Clearly these were not the men to be useful partners in vindicating the temporal power of the Sovereign or in enforcing the strict letter of the Constitution. The King then made a different proposal. Writing out the three Articles of the Charity Bill that had been adopted, he proposed to the Ministry to pass it as a special Bill at the next day's sitting, and to drop the remaining clauses. In this way the dignity of the Government would be preserved and

the agitation stopped. Two of the Ministers approved the plan, and the others acquiesced in it. The Council broke up on the understanding that this course would be adopted on the morrow.

But the Ministers, instead of carrying out the arrangement then made, invited the leaders of the Left as well as the Catholic chiefs not in the Cabinet to a consultation the next morning, when it was agreed not to adopt the King's plan. In these circumstances there was no alternative to withdrawing the Bill, which was done in the form least hurtful to the dignity of the Government, by adjourning the Chambers, and postponing its further discussion until Parliament reassembled in the following October. The King, disappointed in his hopes, raised no objection to the proposal, and signed the necessary decree. The Charity Bill was of no special importance in the King's eyes ; what seemed to him the vital principle at stake was that the act of the majority in the Chambers should stand. Otherwise, not merely was the Constitution violated, but Parliamentary rule would be reduced to a farce. In his address at the close of the session he said : " What is most needed is moderation and reserve among parties. I think the majority is right to renounce the discussion of the Bill. It is for the majority to undertake the generous part."

Writing to an ex-Minister in the following September his views on the crisis, King Leopold said : " My impression in June was that the Conservative Party would get out of its difficulties by a moderate and generous behaviour. There was good reason for that belief, but a portion of the press and certain individuals have greatly spoiled and weakened the excellence of the position. It must not occur again, or it will spoil the position to a disastrous extent."

No Government can tamely acquiesce in such a defeat as the withdrawal—even although qualified as temporary—of the Charity Bill implied for the Catholic party without signing its own death-warrant. Differences of opinion immediately revealed themselves among the Catholics themselves. There was no single leader whom all would follow ; there was not even agreement about the Bill, which some wished to abandon

and others to carry at all costs. The recess brought neither union nor confidence in the future. For some reason Ministers attached importance to the communal elections to be held in October, 1857, and although before this occasion these elections had never been considered to possess any political meaning, M. de Decker persuaded himself and his colleagues that they would reveal the drift of public opinion, and furnish an indication of the Government's fate at the next General Election. This view was the more surprising as the Liberals were actually in possession of the civic control of all the cities and larger towns. The King, at a Council held on the day following these elections, when it was known that the Liberals had held their ground, had combated the view of his Ministers, declaring that there was no reason for attaching excessive importance to these communal elections, adding: "Remember that you have my entire confidence. Imagine that you are in a fortress, and that I am with you, and that nobody can turn you out but yourselves."

But the Cabinet had lost all confidence in itself, and was quite unnerved. With an ample majority in the Chamber, it declined to face it, and there has seldom been in political warfare a more pitiable instance of moral collapse. M. de Decker sent in his resignation, and the other Ministers did likewise, some because they shared his views, the others not to separate themselves from their colleagues. Negotiations and conferences ensued, and, as the Catholics continued to be in the majority, no one conceived that any other arrangement could be come to than a rearrangement of the existing Cabinet or the formation of a new one formed from the Right.

The political gossips forgot to take King Leopold into their reckoning. He had given the Ministry bold counsels on two occasions, and had offered to risk his throne in supporting them. They had recoiled from the attempt. He had felt the pulses of these men, and their tremors had revealed to him that they were not those who make history in a dangerous crisis. While they were disputing over petty details the King acted. He turned to MM. Rogier and Frère-Orban, authorising them to form a Liberal Administration and to dissolve the

Chambers. From the dynastic point of view it was a master-stroke.

One curious little incident may be mentioned. M. Dechamps, the ablest of the Catholics, on learning of M. de Decker's resignation, wrote to M. Van Praet, the King's Secretary, for submission to His Majesty an offer to form a new Ministry. M. Van Praet mislaid the letter, which was not found until after MM. Rogier and Frère-Orban had formed their Cabinet. M. Dechamps was a man of high merit. He was *persona grata* with the King, for whom he had just carried out a delicate mission to the Pope. His brother was the eloquent preacher, Father Dechamps, of the Redemptionist Order, afterwards Cardinal-Archbishop of Malines.

The secret history of this revulsion in the attitude of the King towards the contending parties in the State may never be known, for the simple reason that there is probably no secret history to record. The King acted as he did simply and solely because he had lost confidence in his Ministers as men fit to deal with a crisis. They were an excellent crew for fine weather, but in the storms of a constitutional and national contest the experienced captain would leave such men in port. King Leopold very wisely seized the opportunity afforded by M. de Decker's resignation to sever his fortunes from theirs. The wisdom of the King's measure was established by the result of the General Election of December, 1857, which gave the Liberals a majority of 32 votes.

As already stated, King Leopold was not greatly concerned about the Charity Bill, his strong personal view being limited to the practical point that no impediments ought to be placed in the way of persons leaving charitable bequests, and that in fairness their own reasonable conditions ought to be respected. Discussing this episode with a Catholic politician at the time, the King said: "What you say is very sensible, and even very enticing, but you must place yourself in the position of royalty. If you Conservatives begin a steeplechase with the Liberals, what will that bring us to?"

But there were other questions that pressed for a settlement which appeared to him of the most urgent importance,

and of these the first in gravity was the refortification of Antwerp, which had been under discussion since 1851. The King thoroughly distrusted his new neighbour, the Emperor Napoleon. He had no high opinion of his ability, but he believed that the Napoleonic legend would constantly impel him to acts of aggression, of which Belgium might sooner or later be the victim. Besides, Belgium, as the home of a free press, as the sanctuary of the political pamphleteer and plotter, offered a constant source of irritation and annoyance to the Tuileries. If Belgium were seen to be weak and unprepared, the temptation to aggrandisement at her expense might become irresistible. These were the uppermost thoughts in King Leopold's mind, and they acquired fresh force when the Emperor proceeded to reward himself for his "disinterested" action in behalf of Italy in 1859 by incorporating Nice and Savoy with France.

A story was current at the time that the King, in handing to M. Rogier the authority to form a Ministry, had made a sort of convention with him to the effect that the Minister should support His Majesty's views about Antwerp in particular and the army in general. That there was any formal agreement to this effect was not to be believed, and has been authoritatively contradicted.* But there is no reason to doubt that the King spoke to him on the subject of the country's defences, and that Rogier agreed, as he had always done on this point, with his Sovereign as to the necessity of being prepared in a military sense for all eventualities. The establishment of the new Ministry was therefore followed by considerable activity in internal legislation on Liberal lines and in matters of national defence on the King's recommendations and intervention.

The question of maintaining the army at an adequate strength had been constantly in the King's mind after the close of the diplomatic struggle with Holland. The tendency of all Liberal Governments is to neglect the army, and to provide the means for their so-called improvements by cutting down

* By M. Discaillies in his monumental biography of *Charles Rogier*, 4 tomes, Brussels.

the army estimates. So it was in Belgium. Whereas the army had cost during the period of tension between 35,000,000 and 42,000,000 francs yearly, and had never fallen below a total of 100,000 men, the estimates of 1845 fixed it at 80,000 men, and allowed 28,000,000 francs for its maintenance. In 1848 the amount was reduced to 26,800,000 francs, and in 1850 to 25,000,000 francs. The consequence was that the army deteriorated in numbers and efficiency. We have seen how, by the strenuous efforts of King Leopold, the De Brouckère Ministry induced the Chamber to sanction an increased vote. In 1853 the sum of 32,190,000 francs was assigned for the army, which was once more raised to the total of 100,000 men.

But Belgium required, and still, for the matter of that, requires, a definite and practicable system of defence, to enable her army, which has always been limited in numbers, to be utilised to the greatest possible advantage. The scheme favoured by King Leopold was the establishment at Antwerp of a vast fortified position or entrenched camp, which would serve as a rallying-point for the nation and a place of refuge for the dynasty and the Government until relief could come from Belgium's friends and protectors. In July, 1858, the Government submitted a Bill on the subject to the Chamber embodying the proposals of the Commission for which General Renard had drafted the report. The Catholics, ignoring patriotic considerations, and glad of so early an opportunity of showing their displeasure at the King's having thrown them over (which was not the case), voted solidly against it, and a section of the advanced Liberals abandoning the Government, the measure was defeated. M. Rogier offered to resign in a letter in which he expressed his surprise at the conduct of the Catholic leaders. "It was permissible to suppose that the leading members of the Right would not have pushed the spirit of opposition so far as to vote against a measure which was exclusively of national and State interest. I do not know whether these members had taken into adequate account the purport of their vote. I confine myself to stating what it was, and to leaving them the responsibility."

Piqued at this attack on their patriotism, the Catholic leaders defended themselves in an open letter, written by M. Malou. The defence grouped itself under several heads. From the party point of view it was asked, Why should the Catholics be in such a hurry to subserve a Liberal triumph? With regard to the King, it was insinuated that "a little check" would, under the circumstances, do him no harm. With regard to the project, the proposal to make Antwerp the sole base of defence as implying the abandonment of the rest of the country to an invader was not at all to the writer's liking. But the best part of the defence was that showing that the Catholics had really wished only for the prolongation of the debate, and that it was the Government which had insisted upon the acceptance of the measure there and then.

Where M. Malou was most in error, and the King most in the right, was in assuming that Belgium as a whole could be defended against invasion. It was the civilian's opinion on a military question against a soldier's, and the civilian was wrong. He was the more wrong by his own showing, as he expressed the conviction that the Belgian army of 100,000 men nominally would produce only 60,000 effectives. A country is not defended by a proud and confident declaration of the patriotism of a nation. Words and intentions count for little or nothing in such matters. The only valid argument is the adjustment of the available means to the attainment of the end in view. Belgium's means were, and are, limited. To ignore this fact, to assume that they are in any way adequate to the defence of the whole Kingdom, is to invite disaster by rendering useless those means which she does possess, and which, properly applied, are far from inconsiderable. Some of the opponents of the Government scheme did throw out a rival proposition of a practical nature by suggesting that Brussels itself should be made the pivot of national defence instead of Antwerp, but the suggestion was of too vague a character to show whether it was seriously meant or merely a retort used for the purpose of debate. The objections to the proposal were that Brussels had never been a fortified town since the Middle Ages, that the perimeter of defence would

have had to be immense, and that the cost of converting it into a *place d'armes* would have been simply prohibitive. They were so obvious, too, that no one, either then or since,* treated the proposal of making Brussels the centre of Belgian defence as practical or deserving of examination.

Although, then, the Catholic party brought about the defeat of the King's proposals with regard to Antwerp in the session of 1858, it was perfectly evident that they were the only practical ones for the defence of the country. The defence of Belgium did, and does, not mean that not a yard of her territory can be violated by the tread of an invader. She lies open to invasion on two sides. It meant, and means, that her military resources are not frittered away, but concentrated at a point within the reach of those who will always come to her aid. The defence of Belgium really signifies her deliverance from invasion, the restitution of her territorial integrity, and the preservation of her national independence by the combined action of her own people and their allies. From that point of view Antwerp is not merely the best, but the only centre and base of national defence for Belgium.

In April, 1859, General Chazal entered the Ministry, taking over the charge of the War Department for the second time. This General, French by birth, whose heroism at Antwerp was mentioned in a previous chapter, possessed King Leopold's entire confidence, and shared his views. An able speaker as well as organiser, he understood how to put a question before a deliberating assembly in the manner most calculated to win its support. The appointment of General Chazal was the first step in the revival of the question; the second was a kind of appeal to the nation made by the King on the occasion of his replying to an address from the Chambers felicitating him on the birth of the Count of Hainaut, the son and heir of the Duke of Brabant.

The King said :

“ I thank the Chamber for the expression of such kindly and,

* If Belgium ever became an “ armed nation,” which would give her an armed force of nearly a million men, the conversion of Brussels into an entrenched camp would become quite possible, and would probably follow as a matter of course.

I may say, perfectly affectionate sentiments. We have now springing up on Belgian soil the second generation of the national dynasty since its proclamation. Belgium occupies a position often envied by other nations. She owes it, above all, to the moderation which it gives me pleasure to acknowledge is one of the distinctive traits of the Belgian character. As long as I live I will serve as a shield to Belgium. But for this moderation, this admirable behaviour towards other nations, to be appreciated, Belgium must be compact in herself. She must be something more than an agglomeration of provinces ; she must subsist by herself, and have a centre of action. I throw myself on the consideration of the Chamber and the country. For twenty-eight years I have been amongst you, and during that period I do not think it can be said that I have exposed Belgium to entanglements or dangers. I am sure I shall not appeal in vain to your patriotism and wisdom."

The new project for the refortification of Antwerp differed in some of its details from that of 1858, although in principle it was the same. In order not merely to make the scheme more attractive, but also to procure the necessary funds, the whole scheme of Belgian defence was modified. The twenty-four fortresses of the post-Waterloo period had been reduced to nineteen by the Fortresses Convention of 1832. General Chazal's plan was based on their further reduction to five—viz., Antwerp, Liège, Namur, Diest, and Termonde. Of these the three first named were those of importance, but to prevent any misconception in the reader's mind it must be added that the fortifications at Liège and Namur in 1858 were not those existing there to-day under the Brialmont scheme of 1888. At Liège there were the citadel and the Chartreuse just as they existed in Marlborough's day ; and at Namur there was the citadel in the fork of the Meuse and the Sambre precisely as celebrated by Uncle Toby. It is the more necessary to specify this as not one of these historic fortresses exists to-day. General Chazal's project, then, was a real concentration of the nation's defence at Antwerp.

The details of the scheme were the demolition of the existing *enceinte*, including the citadel associated with the

names of Alva and Chassé, the construction of a new *enceinte* on an extended perimeter, which would bring the suburbs of Berchem and Borgerhout within the city ; the addition of two citadels, one on the north and the other on the south ; and the creation of an outer line of defence in eight detached forts. Later on this scheme had to be modified, but the Chamber, reversing its decision of the previous year, sanctioned the Bill on 20th August, 1859, by a majority of 57 to 42. The King, writing to the War Minister on the event, said : " I congratulate you with all my heart on the vote of the Chamber. It was, considering the extreme confusion and division of votes, a very ticklish affair." Again, a few months later, he wrote to the same correspondent : " I hope all will go well. If one could only stop this fruitless struggle of parties !" In the course of a public speech he took occasion to declare : " Nations die only by suicide, and Belgium has just proved that she knows how—and intends—to live in independence."

Circumstances soon lent force to the King's desire, and proved that the acceptance of the Bill in principle by the Chamber was only the first stage in a long and difficult discussion. Although the purely military side of the question had been mitigated by coupling with it certain civil attractions likely to conciliate good-will and sympathy in a commercial town, the Bill encountered considerable local opposition. No measure of this kind could possibly be put in execution without offending, or even injuring, some local interests. Land had to be appropriated, buildings had to be demolished, a new *zone de servitudes*, or cleared space, had to be defined beyond the new *enceinte*. The advantages of new quays, a new dock, increased space within the walls, were in the future ; the visible results of the Bill were inconvenience, change, and loss to the actual occupiers. At first it was only a case of grumbling, but it was grumbling at the expense of the Liberals, and under a system of government by party it was perfectly legitimate for the Catholics to coalesce with the opponents of the measure. The Liberal Government, seeing the opposition growing, began to make concessions by curtailing its scheme. The citadels of the north and south were aban-

done; the civil schemes were dropped in order to reduce the total cost.

Out of the new alliance between the Catholics and the local agitators at Antwerp sprang a new party, to which the curious name of "the Party of Meeting" was given. It might be called the Protesters' League. One of its first achievements was the ousting of M. Rogier from the representation of Antwerp, with which he had been connected for over thirty years. In 1862 a deputation from the Antwerp Communal Council was received by the King at Laeken, and in his reply His Majesty took the occasion of vindicating his own views on the subject.

To get an impartial account of the agitations there has been an attempt to produce at Antwerp, one must go back to an epoch close to the events which brought about the political independence of the country. I found in Antwerp a fortress of the first rank, but confined within lines which had become too narrow for the development of the city, and possessing but few outer works calculated to protect it by carrying the defence farther off. This state of things was one of extreme peril for the city, which would thus find itself in case of siege exposed to almost certain destruction. I soon had a desire expressed to me, and that desire was very often repeated afterwards, to see the lines extended; and I myself many years ago put forward an opinion that the lines needed to be widened, and that it was desirable to remove danger from the city by putting the principal means of defence in the detached forts. The state of profound peace in which Europe happened to be, and the impossibility of dedicating sooner any portion of the resources of the country to this great work, have been the reason why these labours have been put off, without, however, letting out of sight the so often repeated wishes of the city of Antwerp. As early as 1848 it was possible to pay serious attention to the measures to be taken, and as long ago as 1854 numerous plans were put forth several and the most extensive of which originated in Antwerp. These are the ones which have been adopted, notwithstanding the considerable sacrifices which they will entail upon the country. The superficies of the city of Antwerp before the extension was, not including the fortifications, 182 hectares (about 455 acres). Since the extension the interior of the place is found to be 1,023 hectares (about 2,557 acres), not counting the fortifications—that is, nearly six times its former extent. The mean distance from the new forts to the clock-tower of Antwerp is 7,500 metres (about $4\frac{1}{4}$ miles). The former liabilities in respect of the old fortifications have almost entirely disappeared, and the Government will give its attention to making the new ones as little irksome as possible. As for the new northern fort, it ought to have on the city side the same circle of liabilities as the old northern fort. However, in the spirit of conciliation, my Government has consented to reduce this by more than half. Efforts have been made to disturb men's minds in reference to this new fort. The old was far from protecting the city on the river side; it was, therefore, indispensable to replace it by a new one, which could offer on this side efficacious defence. The dangers to which the city was formerly exposed on the side of the river were demonstrated in 1830 by the arrival of ships of war in front of the very quays of the city which, had this naval force been more considerable, would have found itself liable to be to a great extent destroyed. The new northern fort completes a system of defence in which

there is nothing exclusive, and the destination of which is to defend the city against all dangers, from whatever side they may come. The great object of the national policy ought to be to maintain the neutrality of the country, but this policy will command the confidence of our neighbours only when it gives them a conviction that the country is really strong, and in a position to fulfil the obligations imposed upon her by her political existence. You know the affectionate devotion I have always felt for the city of Antwerp. I have always striven to keep all danger far from you, and when that has been impossible I have shared it with you.

This final protestation by the King in behalf of the scheme for fortifying Antwerp on the lines of the Government project may be regarded as ending the controversy. Before the Rogier-Frère Ministry came to an end the works for the new position at Antwerp were brought to a successful completion. The old *enceinte* that figured in Chassé's day and his citadel were removed, and on their site were laid out the fine boulevards and avenues that are the ornament of the present city. The new *enceinte*, which still exists, and is one of the finest of its kind, was then constructed. In front of it are the eight detached forts which form the first ring in the city's outer defences. Since the Franco-Prussian War and the increased range of artillery a second ring of forts, at a distance varying from five to seven miles from the city, have been constructed at various times, and were ordered to be completed under a Bill passed in 1908.

The Liberal Government which came into office in November, 1857, therefore kept faith with the King on the Antwerp question.* But it had not been inactive in the matter of domestic legislation on its own lines and in fulfilment of its own programme. With regard to the Charity Bill, it was allowed to lapse, but a more specific significance was given to an article of the Communal Law by converting it into a special

* The following extracts from letters written by the King to General Chazal show his unceasing interest in the question: "They try to torment and annoy you in every way. It is unworthy conduct, and stupid too, for they have in you a real protector. The most noble way of avenging yourself is to bring to a good conclusion that which will for the first time make these provinces secure instead of being the plaything of everybody. You will find in me, as ever, the most faithful support" (March, 1862). "I quite believe that the works at Antwerp suffer from these heavy rains" (July, 1862). "The fortifications of Duppel prove the importance of fortification, and earth-works when they cannot be carried by escalade deserve great attention. General observation shows that the later wars have all turned to sieges; this shows that we were right" (March, 1864).

and separate law, setting forth that a civil status was refused to private foundations such as convents and monasteries. As this law was not retroactive, it produced no very disturbing influence. M. Frère-Orban also devoted much of his attention to introducing fiscal and financial reforms. In 1860 he abolished the octroi duties round the great towns, which was highly appreciated. He attempted fresh legislation with regard to the scholarships and endowments left by private benefactors, but here again he was trenching on the domain of the Church.

Of the 800 separate funds of this character existing throughout Belgium it was computed that no fewer than nine-tenths had a religious basis. The question was not finally composed till 1869, when it was discovered that Frère-Orban's views were not so implacably anti-Catholic as had been supposed. The truth was that time and experience were needed to show that liberty applied without favour or qualification was quite as beneficial to the Catholics as to the Liberals; but this discovery belongs to a later period of Belgian politics. Another material benefit conferred on the country was the increase of the salaries paid to the Civil Service, the officers of the army, and the ministers of religion. These tangible benefits mollified the sentiments of several influential classes in the country.

When the Liberal Government came into office in November, 1857, it seemed to the Catholics that the end of all things had begun. But the Rogier-Frère Ministry displayed unexpected, and even surprising, moderation considering its recent violence in opposition, and more especially during the first few years of its being in office. What was the explanation? The discussion of the Charity Bill of M. de Decker had aroused party passions, and led to the division of the Liberal party into two sections. The extreme Left, or Radicals, led by M. Verhaegen, was as far beyond Frère-Orban in its subversive theories as Frère-Orban was beyond Malou. The doctrinarian party was hostile to the Church, but it was composed of men who in their private life were Catholics. But the extremists were not restrained by any such belief, and had few compunctions

in their proceedings. They were openly anti-religious and freethinkers ; they declared war *à outrance* against any Church or religion at all. They demanded that religious instruction of any kind should be eliminated from the school curriculum, and that disbelief should be given a free reign.

The consequence of this manifestation of socialistic and almost revolutionary tendencies on the part of the extreme Left was that the Ministerial bench acquired a moderation that had not been looked for. Ministers placed a restraint on themselves and on their more responsible followers that was most exemplary. They were absolutely deaf to the suggestion of some extremists to put an end to the pact known as the Antwerp Convention, and to remove religious teaching from the primary schools. Something of the bitterness of the religious feud was again imparted to party politics when, in 1861, an attempt was made, but in vain, to stop the collection of Peter's pence to indemnify the Pope for the loss of territory and revenue. In the following year a more serious encroachment was made on the few remaining possessions of the Church by the secularisation of the cemeteries, which had always formed part of the Catholic churches to which they were attached.

The Cemeteries question gave rise to passionate controversy in political circles, and at one time threatened to provoke even a graver crisis than the Charity Bill. In Belgium the cemeteries had always been blessed by the Bishops, and practically formed part of the Church lands. It was the practice to set aside a small part for non-Catholics. The French law respected this arrangement. The difficulty arose, first, with regard to Catholics who had not followed their religion, to whom the Church refused burial for that reason in holy ground, and secondly, with regard to avowed unbelievers. The cemeteries being regarded as subject to the Church, it was the episcopal authority that decided the conditions under which burial took place. In 1862 this control was taken from the Church, and the cemeteries were secularised. The ground in each was divided into separate plots, including one for unbaptized children and atheists. But the radical alteration was the

taking of the control from the Church and vesting it in the authorities of the commune. M. Frère-Orban laid down the theory, and acted upon it, that "the temporal power must displace and absorb the spiritual."

The Catholics, attacked in their most cherished possession, made an effort to rally their forces, and the local agitation at Antwerp against the changes entailed by the new fortifications gave them a complete victory in that city at the elections of 1863. All the candidates of the Party of Meeting were elected. On the reassembly of the Chamber in November of that year the Liberal majority was reduced to a few votes, and after some weeks' hesitation the Ministry resigned on 14th January, 1864. As parties were so equally divided in the Chamber, the King refused to nominate a Catholic Cabinet, and when M. Dechamps offered to undertake the mission of forming a Government, his proposal was rejected. The King's reason for taking this decided step was that he knew if the Catholics came into power he would lose the services of General Chazal, and have to submit to changes and a probable curtailment in his plans at Antwerp. He therefore endeavoured to get together a sufficient number of moderate men to form a neutral Administration, or Ministry of Affairs, and on this failing he abruptly sent for M. Frère-Orban, and requested him to remain in office. The Catholics, by their blind opposition to the army reforms and the fortification of Antwerp, lost their most favourable chance of securing a long lease of power. Their lack of energy in organisation and educating public opinion during the critical months from June, 1863, to June, 1864, entailed their defeat in the elections of August, 1864, when 64 Liberals were returned as against 52 Catholics.*

The Liberals signalised their triumph by passing the Bill which deprived foundations and scholarships of their special administration and religious character. The King acquiesced in this suppression of individual liberty with great reluctance. He wrote at the time to one he trusted: "I hope all will go

* The number of representatives fixed by the Constitution at one representative for 40,000 of the population, was originally 96. By this year it had risen gradually to 116.

well if this sterile war of parties can be mollified;" and he referred to "those madmen who, in the passion of their party zeal, would push society out of the path of civilisation at the certain risk of very soon seeing it degenerate into barbarism."

In concluding our sketch of the development and progress of party politics in Belgium under the first Leopold it is appropriate to say a few words in explanation of the term "Catholic" as applied to a political party in Belgium. The Catholic party is the same as the Conservative party in England, and it is noticeable that King Leopold I. almost invariably called it by that name in his correspondence. After the downfall of the Unionists and the advent of an aggressive Liberal party, whose main programme was to strip the Church of its few remaining privileges, it was not unnatural that the name "Catholic" should have been adopted by those who were defending them. Besides, the Bishops and the priests, whose interests and possessions were at stake, were at first far more active politicians than the laymen who belonged to the same party. But this state of things has long passed away. The privileges and possessions are gone. The ordinary citizen has just as much interest as any member of the clerical body in resisting subversive legislation, and in stemming the tide of Socialism and disbelief. The name "Catholic" has served its turn in Belgium as the denomination of a political party, and its supersession by the name of "Conservative" would place it on a wider and firmer basis, and eliminate the suspicion of clerical interference which drives many moderate Belgians into the Liberal camp.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Flemish Movement.

BELGIUM has, since the 9th century—to go no farther back—been inhabited by two distinct races, speaking different languages. They were united for the first time after the break-up of the Carlovingian Empire, under the House of Burgundy, in the 15th century. What was true in the time of Philip the Good and Charles the Bold was equally true in 1830. The Flemings and the Walloons have always divided the Nine (anciently ten) Provinces between them, with a slight preponderance in population and prosperity on the side of the Flemings. Of the two races the Flemings also were always the best known in England, and in the days of the great communes of Flanders, when Bruges and Ghent were the commercial capitals of Western Europe, they represented for the people of this country the sole inhabitants of the Low Countries. Little or nothing was known here of the Walloons—so little, indeed, that Sir Walter Scott, in his novel of “*Quentin Durward*,” makes the people of Liége, the capital of Wallonia, speak Flemish, a language which was, and is, quite unintelligible to the mass of the people in the eastern half of the country. In 1831 the population of Belgium as at present defined is given as 3,785,814, and of these the larger half spoke only Flemish.* The Walloons of the towns all employed the French language, but in the rural districts they used the old Romance dialect or speech of Walloon. But there was no district in the Walloon provinces so benighted that French was not perfectly familiar, except, indeed, in a few parts of Limburg,

* The first census of languages in Belgium was only taken in 1866, when 2,041,748 spoke French only, 2,406,491 Flemish only, and 308,361 the two languages. In 1831 the bilingualists were comparatively few.

where German was, and is still, used as the alternative for Walloon. Although the Walloons were little known in England, from their being cut off from the sea, they were one of the purest stocks left in Europe, clearly distinguishable from their French and German neighbours, and preserving much of the type of their Roman ancestors, for we do not doubt that Wallonia originated in the mingling of the original Belgic tribes and the military colonies planted by the later Cæsars.

The Belgian Revolution of 1830 was something more than a national rising against the Dutch ; it was the assertion by the Walloons of their right to govern themselves. The struggle in its early stages was entirely between the French-speaking Belgians and the Dutch. It was Brussels and Liège that gave the impetus to the whole movement. The Flemings stood aside either because they were slower to move than their more impetuous brethren of the Eastern Provinces, or because the similarity between the Flemish and Dutch languages had made Dutch rule appear less foreign in their eyes. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that the Flemings played a minor part in the expulsion of the Dutch and the founding of the modern Kingdom of Belgium. The great leaders of the popular movement were exclusively Walloons, or at least men who spoke French. The literature of the movement of emancipation was entirely French. The speeches in the National Congress were made in that language. The ideals of the Belgian party were based on French example and education. Had anyone proposed in 1830 or the years immediately following that the Flemish language should be employed on an equal footing with French, he would have been regarded as a friend of the Dutch, an Orangist, and a traitor to his own country. Considering the predominance of the Walloons at the moment, it is remarkable that French was not declared by the Constitution to be the official language of the country. The Constitution-makers were apparently convinced that Flemish was a patois which could never cope with French, and that it would gradually be superseded and die out. There is the alternative supposition that their other

labours kept them so much employed that they overlooked the point altogether.

The twenty-third Article of the Constitution is exceedingly vague beyond the expressed intention to leave everybody free to continue the use of his accustomed language. There was to be no compulsory uniformity. The Article read as follows : " The employment of the languages used in Belgium is optional; it can only be regulated by the law, and that solely for acts of the public administration, and for judicial business." According to this, Walloon and German were put on the same footing as French and Flemish, but the Legislature had the right to choose the language for the Government and the courts, and it chose French in practice, although no special enactment was made to that effect.

The situation created by the Belgian Revolution was, therefore, this : The French-speaking half of the nation acquired the monopoly, practically speaking, of power and the direction of affairs, while the Flemish-speaking half, although it possessed a numerical majority, was relegated, in fact, to an inferior and passive position. To attain equality the man of Flanders had to learn French, and to use it as his ordinary speech. It would not have been a bad thing for either himself or Belgium if the whole Flemish race could have been led to do so, but the occasion for making French the one State language was not utilised ; it soon passed away, and the assertion of their rights by the Flemings was bound to follow in due course. Still, for fifty years, and more in some respects, French retained its pride of place in the Legislature, the courts, official documents, and in literature, although the remarkable revival of Flemish activity in that field soon diminished, if it did not displace, its ascendancy.

The Flemings, although their action in 1830 was marked by hesitation and by an absence of the fervour, for instance, of the band that Rogier led from Liége, were not so much in sympathy with Dutch rule as has been supposed. There was one grand and insuperable obstacle between the two races. The Flemings were strong and stanch Catholics. The anti-clerical legislation of King William in matters of education

hit the Flemings in their most cherished convictions. The episcopal palaces of Ghent and Bruges were the centres of opposition to the Dutch, just as they became in later years to the Liberal Party. Religious conviction was the vital force of Flanders, where the people had remained completely unaffected by the French doctrines of the 18th century. Among the Walloons these doctrines had spread scepticism and disbelief, but the Flemings were as uncontaminated by what Rome called the new heresies as the Irish. But for this obstacle, the severing power of which is most clearly visible in Ireland, it is not at all improbable that the Flemings might have preserved their connection with the Dutch after 1830. The point may be put in this way: The Belgian Revolution in the Walloon provinces was due, among other things, to racial and linguistic differences, whilst the Flemings co-operated in it on religious grounds and under the influence of the Church.

Although the final solution of the question was not reached until many years after the close of Leopold I.'s reign, it is necessary to describe here the first phases of a movement which effected what may be termed a pacific revolution in Belgium's internal condition. Considering the fact that any overt attempt to exalt Flemish to the position of a national language pending the final arrangement of political relations between Belgium and Holland would have been represented, on account of its close similarity to Dutch, as an Orange plot, it is not at all surprising to find that the Flemish movement originated in a seemingly innocent effort to revive the purity of the old language of Flanders, and to preserve the texts of the early Flemish writers. In 1834 the first sign of the birth of a new propaganda was furnished by the publication of a modest pamphlet at Ghent deploring the risk of a language disappearing which had a literature 800 years old. A purely literary movement of this nature attracted no opposition or suspicion.

Two years later a small society was formed, also in Ghent, and it started a review, entitled the *Belgisch Museum*, to serve as the organ of its views. A club was also founded about the

same time, and in its title was revealed the programme of the party: "De taal is gansch het volk"—i.e., "The language is the whole people." This movement was entirely non-political, and the controlling committee was composed of priests as well as doctors and professors. The leading spirit was Jan Franz Willems, who combined the pursuits of publisher and author. He had begun the old-text movement by publishing the medieval romance *Reinaert de Vos*, which was claimed as a product of Flemish genius until greater research compelled the admission that it was only a Flemish translation of an early French original. But there was no dearth of genuine Flemish texts awaiting preservation by publication.

Willems was greater as an organiser than as a literary authority. Under all the Administrations from the Burgundian period there had existed schools or societies of rhetoric and declamation in Flanders, and although their activity had ceased, they survived in name. He revived their energies by conferences, at which the old legends of the country were recited, and suggestions of a practical character were put forward to advance the interests of the Flemish race. The *mouvement Flamissant* began about this time to attract the notice of the Government, which saw in it, however, a purely literary propaganda, and in 1845 a vote was passed assigning a certain credit for the cost of promoting and assisting that portion of its work which consisted in the preservation of old Flemish texts. The lukewarmness of this official patronage may be inferred, however, from the fact that, while the vote was passed in 1845, no subsidy was paid out of the Treasury till 1854.

At this stage (1846) Willems died, and the task of chief organiser to the party was taken up by Snellaert, who gave the movement a wider character by extending the operations of the Flemish society to Holland. In 1849 a general conference of the Flemings of the North and South—that is, of Flanders and Holland—was held at Ghent. It was decided to make it an annual meeting, and out of compliment to the Northern brothers the next year's assembly was fixed at Amsterdam. A subsequent conference was held at Utrecht, but, owing to

the indifference of the Dutch, the programme reverted to purely Belgian lines, and the conferences in Holland were dropped. But this movement across the frontier had added to the importance of the propaganda. At the least it made it more talked about. A different chain of circumstances at this juncture brought it into marked prominence. Two men of genius arose to furnish proof that Flemish was not a mere dialect and patois—"One of those languages that have had troubles," as a Frenchman defined them—but a living tongue susceptible of being made the tool of verse or prose of the highest order of merit. These men were Henri Conscience and Charles Louis Ledeganck.

Ledeganck, the Flemish Byron, as he has been called, was the first to invest the Flemish movement with high distinction. He combined the characters of poet and magistrate. In the latter capacity he translated the Civil Code into Flemish. In the former character he sang of the great days of Flanders in his "Ode to Bruges," and his fine ballad of "The Three Sister Cities" (de drie Zustersteden=Bruges, Ghent, and Antwerp). He roused the national sentiment of the Flemings, and he encouraged them to fresh efforts by declaring that they were only asleep, and not dead, and that their future might equal their past. But while he was intensely Flemish, he was also strongly Belgian and national, and quite free from the slightest suspicion of Orangeism, with which many of the other Flamings were infected. He was so strongly opposed to Dutch influence even on the Flemish tongue that he favoured the independent spelling shown by the use of "y" instead of the Dutch "ij"—e.g., Kortrych, not Kortrijch (Courtrai). Ledeganck died young, but his influence had been ennobling and beneficial. With such a poet no one could declare that Flemish was not a language.

Conscience, who in his youth had fought as a volunteer in the War of Liberation, came on the scene somewhat later than Ledeganck, and formed at Antwerp a Flemish league similar to that of Willems at Ghent, but it differed in this respect from the earlier association in that it was composed of men who were able to prove by their own literary achievements that Flemish

deserved to live on equal terms with French, and not on those of purely contemptuous sufferance. Conscience, who may be called the Walter Scott of Flanders, and who in the satirical works of Walloon writers is represented as having been the first to teach the Flemings to read, wrote prolifically, and he, too, chose for his subject the heroic period of the communes and the great deeds of the Arteveldes and other popular leaders. His work, the *Lion of Flanders*, a tale of the Battle of the Spurs, is to be found in most Flemish houses, however humble, and has been named the Flemish Bible. But Ledeganck and Conscience, although the foremost, were by no means the sole champions of Flemish letters. They had their followers and even their school. Van Beers as a poet reached a higher plane even than Ledeganck, and discovered subtleties in the Flemish tongue that had hitherto not been suspected. Théodore Van Ryswyck, Maeterlinck, Pol de Mont, and the sisters Loveling have continued the traditions of Conscience down to the present day.

The Flemish literary movement, begun so humbly in 1834, had, therefore, more than justified itself before twenty years had passed. By the achievements of its leaders it showed that Flemish was not a mere dialect, but a language. It had acquired a distinction greater in many respects than any it had yet achieved. It also attracted the more attention, and seemed the more remarkable, because during this period there was no rival literary movement in Walloon Belgium. That came later with Defrecheux and others, spurred on by a spirit of emulation; but in the period of which we are now speaking it was Flemish literature alone that placed Belgium in the van of European letters.

In 1846 the Flemish movement lost something of its purely literary character, and partook more of that of political propagation. The cleavage had just taken place between Catholics and Liberals. The Catholics, although unorganised in the sense that the Liberals were, had a hold on the Flemings which they strengthened by associating themselves with the aspirations that lay at the root of the Flemish movement. The Bishops of Ghent and Bruges encouraged the propa-

ganda, and when political differences led to a split in the Flemish camp the Catholics rallied round a section called the David Foundation (the Abbé David had been the first to join Willems), while the Liberals centred on one called the Willems Foundation.

One of the first consequences of the introduction of the political element into the movement was the extension of the Flemish press. In 1844 there were only seventeen papers published in the language, and not one of them was a daily. In 1851 the number had risen to fifty, with two dailies; and in 1854 there were seventy-two, of which six were dailies. The great Flemish journalist of the period was Amand Neut, who founded and edited the *Vlaemsche Land* and the *Standaerd van Vlaenderen*. The Flemish movement having passed from the purely literary phase into the more active one of party politics and newspaper polemics, the leaders naturally assumed a more aggressive pose, and demanded the concession of equal rights to the Flemings. It was quite evident that they would not be satisfied now with the offer of a subsidy for the preservation of old texts, or with the appointment of some of their literary lights—Ledeganck among others—as inspectors of public schools. It had become more or less a national movement, which, sooner or later, would have to be satisfied or reckoned with. If evidence were asked as to its being a genuine national movement, it would suffice to state that, whenever Flemish questions were raised, no distinction was made between the adherents of the David and Willems Foundations. The two groups voted together on all purely Flemish questions. A shrewd French observer, the chemist and *intransigent* Raspail, then resident in Belgium, passed this criticism on the Flemish character: "The Fleming is slow to move, but when he takes up his stick to go on a journey he travels far."

The governing party in Brussels, which had in the first place tolerated the movement as one of an innocent and innocuous character, began to look askance at it when it put on a political garb. There was, first of all, reluctance on the part of the French-speaking section to admit those who spoke another and practically foreign language to a position of



H.M. KING LEOPOLD II.

At the time of his Accession.



equality in the Chamber and the Administration. There was a second and still weightier objection. The Walloons were largely infected with Liberal views, and the Liberal Administration, thanks to the supremacy of this half of the nation and also of the French language, conceived that it might anticipate a long lease of power. Were MM. Rogier and Frère-Orban to jeopardise their own position by encouraging the introduction of an entirely new force into the political arena—a force which they had good reason to know would be Catholic rather than Liberal? Hard put to it for an effective argument against the granting of the Flemish demands, which were in harmony with the text of the Constitution, M. Rogier confined himself to the general statement that the original impression given to the Belgian Revolution by the events of 1830-1, which were brought to pass under Walloon direction and inspiration, must not be modified, leaving it to be understood that concessions to the Flemings would entail a vital modification of these principles.

M. Rogier, it will be remembered, was by family association and education entirely sympathetic to France. The demands of the Flemings were personally repugnant to him. He was not a bilinguist, and he would have liked to see French adopted in law, as it was in practice, as the language of Belgium. While he was in office the Flemish movement encountered, then, either a chilly rebuff or an evasive put-off. The following anecdote relates to a later period, but it is so thoroughly typical of M. Rogier's view of the Flemish movement that it may be given here. When Flemish had begun to achieve some successes on its path to equality with French as the sister language of the realm, it was suggested that the heir to the throne, the Duc de Brabant, should learn Flemish, and in deference to Flemish sentiment Henri Conscience was nominated the royal tutor. M. Rogier received him on the occasion of his appointment, and addressed him in something like the following terms: "Monsieur Conscience, you are appointed tutor for Flemish to the Duc de Brabant, and you will draw your salary in the regular way; but you will *not* give His Royal Highness any lessons."

The first concession made to the Flemings by the central Government was by M. de Decker, himself a Fleming, who, in 1856, sanctioned the appointment of a special Commission to consider and report upon the demands of the Flemish people. The Commission considered the question in all its details, and reported its proposals at full length, but the report so upset the equanimity of the Walloon members of the Government that they peremptorily refused to allow it to be published, and it has remained secret to the present day. There is no doubt that the Commission reported in favour of granting the full equality claimed by the Flemish propagandists for their language.

Some minor concessions to Flemish, made, however, for the greater part, by local and not the central authority, may be noted. In 1850 the provincial Administration of Antwerp enacted that all its employés should speak Flemish, on the reasonable ground that French, not being understood by the inhabitants, was useless. The city authorities at Antwerp, in 1860, took the same step for their servants, and finally, in 1866, shortly after the death of Leopold I., they proclaimed Flemish the official language of Antwerp. In 1860 M. Coomans, one of the principal Catholic journalists, was instrumental in carrying a law allowing students to compose the theme on taking their first degree in either French or Flemish. On this occasion the somewhat vague terms of Article 23 of the Constitution were made more precise by the explicit definition that French and Flemish were the only national languages.

In 1861 the demands of the Flemish party were brought before the Chamber for the first time in a regular form. A debate of considerable violence ensued, and the advocates of the Flemish movement did not spare their Walloon compatriots for having kept them in the background, and for having attempted to exclude the larger half of the nation from the position of equality to which it was entitled. After two days' stormy debate the following paragraph was introduced into the Address to the King : " We hope that the Government will take steps to satisfy the claims put forward by the Flemish people, which are recognised to be well founded." That this

was no empty statement was shown in 1863, when M. Delaet, the elected Deputy for Antwerp, took the oath to the Constitution in Flemish instead of French, and the innovation was accepted by the Chamber.

In the Courts of Justice, too, the question made progress as well as in Parliament. A Fleming, for some press offence, was proceeded against in one of the Brussels courts. He declined to plead in any language but his own. His counsel supported his action, and declared their intention to act in the same manner. On another occasion two men accused of murder were tried in French, which was quite incomprehensible to either, and sentenced to death without having understood a word of the evidence or the statements of the counsel on either side. The most was made of these cases in the press, and a motion in the Chamber to the effect that all judges and magistrates should understand Flemish as well as French was lost by only a few votes.

The question had reached this stage by the close of Leopold I.'s reign. It had not been finally settled, but it had been put in the way of settlement. It had also become perfectly clear that the Flemings were in earnest, and that they were determined to secure their rights. On the other hand, the Walloons were constrained to admit that they could only continue to exclude Flemish and uphold the supremacy of French at the risk of a break-up of the Kingdom. Confronted by so serious an alternative, concession was inevitable. The demands of one-half of the nation could not be rejected by the other half. It was only a matter of a little time to see whether the demand was made in real earnest, whether the *mouvement Flamingant* was impelled by national sentiment, or by the whims of a learned coterie. The result some years later established the seriousness of the movement, and crowned it with success.

The language difficulty has sometimes been adduced as an element of weakness in the stability of Belgium. It is right, then, to remember that it existed long before the 19th century. There was the same difference of language in the 15th century when the Burgundian rule established the first union of the

country. There is no hostile collision* between Flemings and Walloons to be found in history, and some unwritten fact or secret tie evolved from antiquity has kept these totally different races allied, free from antagonism, and in the end united. The like of this good understanding, of this durable peace between races who in speech are mutually unintelligible, is not to be found elsewhere. Language is the main bond between races and communities. Yet in Belgium, where union is more essential than in larger States for continued existence, it is absent. Some Belgian theorist has conceived the idea that the solution of the matter lies in the existence of a Belgian soul which occupies the bodies of both Fleming and Walloon.

It is at least an explanation more easy to understand to suggest that the union is due partly to the law of necessity and partly to the appreciation of the fact that each nation is necessary to the other. Belgium, as it is, is even with its present seven millions† of people a small State; but if it were divided into two—a Flanders, and, let us say, a Wallonia—each would become a very minor and quite insignificant factor in European affairs. It is therefore permissible to say that the most dogged Fleming and the most impetuous Walloon, while preserving in his inner heart some secret cult of the fancied superiority of his own race, have been brought by facts to see the greater advantage of being a Belgian. Their material interests are the same, they are confronted by similar perils, and it is inconceivable, if one race lost its independence, that the other's could long endure. The difference of language, if not a disintegrating element, is at least a defect in the national sense; but it is now hopeless to expect either of the two races to yield the palm of victory in the contest of languages to the other. The most honourable, and the only practical, solution of the problem is for all Belgians to learn the two languages,

* It is probable that this was due to the fact that the French-speaking race touched Germany, and cut off the Flemings from the Germans. Had the position of Flanders been reversed there can hardly be a doubt that it would long ago have fallen into the German sphere.

† In 1866, the year after Leopold I.'s death, the population of Belgium was 4,827,833. This had risen in 1904 to 7,074,910.

and to become bilingual. After all, the achievement is not so difficult as it may appear at a first glance. To give but one instance, it has been accomplished with remarkable success by educated Indians, all of whom are bilinguists ; and to revert to Belgium herself, it has already been done by one-eighth of her people, and at every census the proportion shows a marked increase.

The advancement and self-assertion of the Flemings have had a steadying effect on the political situation in the country itself. The triumph of the Liberals led to rapid legislation at the expense of those who possessed the few remaining privileges. The demands of the ultra-Liberals were of such a nature as even to menace the preservation of the throne and the continuance of the dynasty. An aggressive and encroaching political creed had come into fashion, and threatened to carry everything before it. The Liberals claimed the spoils of the victor. In the full flush of their triumph at the hustings they treated their opponents with defiance and contempt. So far as the French-speaking section of the nation was concerned there seemed no reason to hope for any marked or adequate change. A continuance of the unrestrained career of Frère-Orban after the success of 1856 could only have resulted in the attempt to establish a Republic which, as a departure from the institutions guaranteed by the Powers, would have entitled grave peril and possibly foreign intervention.

At this critical juncture the Flemish movement readjusted the political balance. The Flemings were not given over to French doctrines, and they were not committed to the ideals of the Liberal Congress. They took, by their character and their religious sentiments as good Catholics, a conservative view of things. They were not in a hurry to destroy what had existed for many years or generations. They were still less eager to undo what had been done only the day before. The Constitution that had crowned the Belgian Revolution seemed good enough to them to live under without any tinkering. The restless innovations of the Walloon politicians encountered a dam of Flemish resistance. In the first stages the solid, if small, phalanx from Flanders imposed caution and circum-

spection on the Liberal leaders ; later on it grew in numbers and cohesion until it almost equalled its opponents, and finally it secured, after a hard struggle, the possession of that power in the Chamber which the doctrinaire party had wished to claim as an indefeasible right.

The subsequent stages of this important question, which forms so vital a part in the most recent development of political and party life in Belgium, belong to the reign of Belgium's second King. But before Leopold I. passed away he had received some assurance as to what was coming, and he was given some reason to hope that Belgium would not tear herself to pieces in party feuds. It is not going too far to say that Leopold I. often looked upon the Liberal programme and proceedings with absolute dismay, and he saw no means of checking them. The Constitution invested him with very little power, and when the country returned the Liberals with an overwhelming majority, he had no alternative save to submit to the inevitable with due resignation. The energy of the Flemish propagandists, who succeeded in 1861 in forcing their views on a hostile and indifferent Chamber, raised a new vista. The solution of the difficulty promised to be found not in the adjustment of parties, but through the assertion of the racial partner who had hitherto been dormant. King Leopold had not been brought into any close contact with Flemish public men. The men he found in authority were Walloons, and French-speaking. He himself did not speak Flemish. When he unveiled, in 1859, the fine statue of James Van Artevelde in Ghent, his panegyric on the great days of the communes was delivered in French. But he was a close observer of the popular movements in the country. The Flemish revival provided him with good ground for hoping that a term would soon be placed not, indeed, to the sterile and useless strife of parties, but to the exactions and encroachments on individual liberty of the Liberal Party. The Flemish vote alone secured the return of a considerable Conservative Party, and thus prevented the country, the Constitution, and the dynasty from being swept away by an inundation of subversive principles.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Scheldt, Colonies, and Mexico.

ONE of the most interesting incidents in the national history of Belgium is that known as "the freeing of the Scheldt." The liberation of the great national port of Antwerp from the hindrances and fines put upon it by Dutch rivalry during two centuries and a half placed the crown on the achievement of converting the long tributary provinces of Belgium into a distinct kingdom. The credit of this success belongs to Baron Lambermont,* who during his long career in the Brussels Foreign Office raised the reputation of Belgian diplomacy to the highest point in European consideration.

In the 16th century Antwerp was at the head of European commerce and its own prosperity. It had succeeded to the greatness that belonged in the 15th century to Bruges, and it rivalled the splendour of the Mediterranean ports of Genoa and Venice, both of which it promised to surpass in the near future. The religious strife of the latter half of that century, however, ruined many of its citizens, and sent the greater number of those who survived into exile. The sieges of Alva and Parma, the massacres in the Spanish Fury, arrested the prosperity of the great city on the Scheldt, and converted it from a scene of human activity into one of mourning. But the desolation need only have been temporary if the Scheldt had but remained open and free. The Spaniards, in concluding their first peace in 1609 with the United Provinces,† neglected to insure this

* Count André de Robiano has written a very interesting memoir of his old chief (Brussels, 1905). To those who wish to study the Scheldt question in detail, *Anvers à travers les Ages*, by P. Gérard, and *Histoire du péage de l'Escaut*, by M. Grandgaing, are the essential works.

† See Part I., pp. 341, 342.

natural right, and the Dutch, prompt to seize the advantage, established an informal but effective blockade. A regular form was first given to the closure of the Scheldt by the Treaty of Munster in 1648, one of its clauses providing that the Scheldt, including its different channels, should be closed on the side of the territory of the United Provinces, or, in other words, that no ships should be allowed to enter it from the ocean. What the Dutch once secured they clung to with rare tenacity, and every succeeding treaty with Spain or the Empire gave fresh force to this particular clause.

The inevitable consequence followed. The city which, in the days of Charles V., contained over 100,000 people, and among them some of the wealthiest families in Europe, had only 45,000 in the middle of the 18th century, and one-third of them received charitable relief. The port which, in the days of its prime, had seen 2,500 ships at anchor in its river, and 500 ships sail or arrive in a single day, received the visits of only four ships throughout the year 1761, and when a French brig arrived a few years later the occurrence was regarded as semi-marvellous. These isolated evasions of the Dutch blockade testified to the strictness with which it was maintained. In 1782-5 the Emperor Joseph II. made a feeble attempt to secure the freeing of the river, but it came to nothing.* As prosperity and influence had both abandoned Antwerp, there was no local opinion to keep the question open, to protest continuously against the wrong, and to go on protesting until the wrong was redressed. The people of Antwerp were crushed and silent, and it was no one's affair to see them righted.

The first break in the gloom that had fallen over this ancient city was effected by the French. In November, 1792, the French made their first entry into Antwerp, and on the following day they issued a proclamation to the effect that henceforth navigation on the Scheldt should be free. The Dutch control of the river was declared to be "a survival of feudal tyranny and a violation of the rights of man." On this occasion French authority did not endure very long, but two years later it was

* See Part I., pp. 395, 396.

re-established, and continued to be the Government in Belgium for twenty years. *In Holland also the rule of the Orange family came temporarily to an end, and the Batavian Republic was established under French influence. The Treaty of The Hague concluded with France in May, 1795, contained a clause specially enacting that the Scheldt should be free, and the event was celebrated at Antwerp with due solemnity on 10th August in the same year.

France thus restored life to the long slumbering port, but it was Napoleon who gave it fresh prosperity. He assigned several millions sterling for the construction of new docks and quays, and he foretold for Antwerp, as the Continental rival to London, a future more brilliant than anything in her past. The development of Antwerp, even in the brief period of French rule, and despite the naval superiority of this country, was remarkable, the average number of ships in the last few years being nearly 3,000. The establishment of the Kingdom of the Netherlands forbade the revival of the Dutch exclusive control of the river ; but whereas Napoleon had done everything to promote the prosperity of Antwerp, King William, deferring to the wishes of his own people, who were most anxious that Amsterdam and Rotterdam should not suffer from the far superior advantages of Antwerp, neglected its interests and discouraged all schemes suggested for its benefit. Consequently the commerce of Antwerp fell off, the shipping trade languished, and after 1818 it was rare for over 500 ships to enter the port during the year.

Such was the situation when the Belgian Revolution broke out ; and reference has been made in its proper place to the suspicion held at the time that Chassé's bombardment of Antwerp was inspired by the wish to destroy an inconvenient and menacing rival to Dutch trade. One of the measures adopted by King William was to revive the pretension to close the Scheldt by imposing a strict blockade, and his diplomatists were instructed to stand by the principle that all the old rights of Holland under the Treaty of Munster and its successors were revived by the defection of the Belgians from his rule. Unfortunately for this medieval pretension, which might be

set in the same category as the old Spanish dogma that the sea belonged to His Most Catholic Majesty, the Vienna Congress had laid down the most liberal principles on the subject of river navigation, which it declared should be free from all unfair or harsh hindrances. The demand, therefore, of King William could not meet with the ready acquiescence of the London Conference, and Lord Palmerston in particular took up a pronounced position against it. His "theme" was specially directed towards curtailing this exorbitant demand, and was based on the declaration that the navigation of the Scheldt did not affect Holland and Belgium alone, but concerned all trading nations alike. Lord Palmerston therefore proposed that the Dutch claim should be restricted to the levy of a toll of one florin per ton, that this should be paid annually by the Belgian Government in one sum, and that it was never to exceed 150,000 florins in a single year. The payment being made by Belgium alone, and in a prescribed form, there would be no interference whatever with the trade of foreign nations. On the other hand, the payment by Belgium being so small, there was no hardship imposed upon her, in comparison, at all events, with the great benefit to Antwerp.

On this point as on others, the Twenty-four Articles did not embody Lord Palmerston's terms, but it would be going much too far to say that they did not exercise some influence on the final decisions of the Conference. The Dutch Government claimed a toll of four florins per ton, refused to accept a limit to the annual tonnage, or to agree to the payment in a single sum. The points were stubbornly contested. The two latter points were decided in favour of Holland, but the toll was fixed at one and a half florins. This regulation, of course, did not come into effect till 1839 with the acceptance of the definitive treaty.

The payment of this toll was a heavy imposition on Belgium, but it did not prevent the Government from taking practically the whole charge on its own shoulders in the desire to foster the trade of Antwerp. A vote was passed in the Chamber sanctioning the repayment to foreigners of all charges levied

by the Dutch for the right to navigate the river. At first an exception was made in the case of the Dutch themselves, but M. Rogier soon came to the conclusion that it was not to the interest of Antwerp to make any exception. The toll paid to Holland was therefore a burden on the State Exchequer, and this burden was felt so much that the hope was at last expressed that the number of ships visiting Antwerp would not greatly increase. This obligation, voluntarily accepted by Belgium in the first place, became the more onerous because foreign Governments, in negotiating treaties of commerce with Belgium, insisted on the insertion of a clause by which that country accepted definitely the payment of this toll. In consequence of this insistence by the other Powers, the voluntary act became a formal obligation and liability.

The fetters placed on Belgian trade were irksome as well as costly. It was not at all agreeable to have to pay a fine for the use of the only gate to the ocean and the outer world, for Ostend was only available for ships of limited tonnage. Moreover, when competition between the commercial nations became keener, every charge told in the aggregate, and produced an adverse influence on the development of national trade. It was about the year 1856, when the Vicomte Vilain XIII. was Foreign Minister, that M. Auguste Lambermont, then at the head of the commercial department in the Belgian Foreign Office, put forward for the first time a scheme for buying up the claim of the Dutch by capitalising the tolls and paying down a lump sum to Holland. The solution of the question was more difficult than it appeared at first sight, for not merely had Holland to be brought round to the mood to accept, but the great trading Powers had to be persuaded to pay their quota of the total amount. Of the two tasks, the latter was the more laborious, and needed the more delicate handling.

Baron Lambermont was allowed to work out his own plan, to prescribe the course for his Government to follow, and to denote the favourable opportunities for taking action conducive to the desired result. Preliminary inquiries established the conviction that there would be no insuperable objections made

to the capitalisation of the tolls on the part of the Dutch Government. As a matter of fact, the relations of the two countries had steadily improved, and the Dutch were most desirous of harmony. In October, 1861, the new King of Holland, William III.—son and successor of William II., who died in 1849—visited Liège, and was received in state by King Leopold. By that time an agreement had been practically come to between Belgium and Holland on the Scheldt question, but the earlier stages of the negotiations with the other Powers claim attention.

The first opportunity for pressing Baron Lambermont's views on the general conscience was afforded by the Conference held in Copenhagen in 1856 on the subject of suppressing the tolls levied by Denmark on navigation by the Sound and the two Belts. Baron Lambermont then called public attention to the fact that a similar condition of things existed on the Scheldt, and added that Belgium's reimbursement of the toll was a voluntary act on her part, and not an acquired right by any third party. He then advised his Government to enter into direct negotiation with the Danish Government for the conclusion of a separate convention, by which Denmark acquitted Belgium from paying any quota to the sum raised to free the Danish straits, in return for Belgium's engagement that in the event of the capitalisation of the tolls on the Scheldt she would pay whatever share might fall on Denmark. Thus very adroitly the two principles were introduced—first, that the tolls on the Scheldt were just as susceptible of being bought up as those in the Baltic; and secondly, that each navigating State was liable for its quota.

A second case of this kind arose in 1860, when, on the suggestion of the British Government, the Stade tolls levied by the Hanoverian Government on the Elbe were capitalised. This gave Baron Lambermont his second chance. He caused negotiations to be opened with the Hanoverian Government similar to those undertaken with Denmark, and on 18th February, 1861, a Belgic-Hanoverian convention, on the same lines as those of the earlier arrangement described, was signed.

With these two precedents to support its proceedings, the

Belgian Government then asked the Dutch Government whether it would admit the principle of the capitalisation of the Scheldt tolls. The reply was frankly cordial and affirmative. For 250 years the Dutch had pursued a selfish and exacting policy with regard to the Scheldt, and towards the nation of which it formed the most advantageous outlet. They had realised that in the hands of a trading people it would enable it to become a formidable competitor to themselves, and they had done all they could to prevent its use. Broader views, a more considerate attitude towards their neighbours, and perhaps the feeling that a claim based on injustice might some day or other be repudiated without any compensation whatever, produced a change in the historic policy of the Dutch. The Belgian inquiry was responded to in a manner that greatly gratified the Government at Brussels.

The next step was to fix the principles upon which the quota of each of the contributing States was to be ascertained. The fairest way was evidently to decide the amount by a comparison of the tonnage using the Scheldt under each flag, but if this were done literally Belgium would have had to contribute little or nothing towards the freeing of her own river. Baron Lambermont saw that to push this pretension to its full logical extent would be to defeat his own ends, and to rouse opposition in quarters like England, where the sentiment was wholly favourable to the Belgian view. It was an occasion for prompt and clear action, and for a display of generous and large views. The Belgian Government undertook, on the instigation of its adviser, to defray one-third of the total sum required. It must not be supposed that this was a trifling concession. By the comparison of tonnage the share of Belgium would have been only 2,000,000 francs; by her own proposal, she paid 12,000,000 francs, or nearly half a million sterling.

M. Van de Weyer, still Belgian Minister in London, approached the British Government with the double statement that Holland assented to the capitalisation, and that Belgium would provide one-third of the sum required (36,278,566 francs, or £1,451,142). The acquiescence of England was the most essential of all, for her quota would work out at a sum

superior even to that of Belgium herself. M. Rogier paid a special visit to London to bring Lord John Russell, then Premier, over to the Belgian side. The consent of this country, which had taken the leading part in the earlier negotiations for freeing navigable routes, was easily obtained. Prussia and the Baltic Powers followed suit, and a unanimous agreement was assured before the Conference that was to give it effect assembled in Brussels.

Before the Conference assembled, Belgium had to conclude a definite arrangement with Holland on the subject, and the negotiations carried on at The Hague in the spring of 1863 included, besides the Scheldt tolls, some minor questions, of which two may be mentioned. One related to the right of taking water from the Meuse—a question which is still of great importance in Limburg—and the other to the collection of Customs dues along the frontier. A friendly convention was duly signed, settling all these points, on 12th May, 1863. Belgian treaties, as the reader knows from the debates between 1831 and 1839, have to be sanctioned by the Chambers. An explanatory exposition of the motives that recommend the acceptance of a treaty is always furnished by the Belgian Foreign Department. In this instance it was drawn up by Baron Lambermont alone. As it was a State paper laying down the lines of the relations that ought to subsist between Holland and Belgium, and which, happily, have subsisted ever since with steadily increasing force, it deserves quotation as marking a turning-point in the history of the common Netherlands. It is also a fair instance of the author's rare talent in expounding a great political question with all the niceties and felicitous terms of diplomatic diction :

In pursuing the negotiations of which you have to judge the results, the King's Government did not confine its views to the relief which might be brought to our finances, or even to the improved position that might be created for our maritime commerce. It was guided also by considerations of another order.

Whatever guarantees the treaty of 1839 may have stipulated for in favour of the Scheldt, the right to use the river carried with it a fee. This fact was appreciated at the commencement by the light of the situation as it then presented itself ; but the course of time, the development of commerce, the progress of ideas, have brought out more fully the true significance of this penalty.

Let us say in the first place with perfect frankness, the Scheldt tolls weighed heavily on the relations between Holland and Belgium.

We had to consider whether there was no way to remove them without hurting any interest, any right—let us even say any susceptibility.

Purchase on equitable bases was the sole combination which would fulfil all these conditions. Receiving in the form of capital what they had been receiving in the form of a levy, the Netherlands would not suffer any loss. As to difficulties of any other kind, they were not to be expected. The march of civilisation and the best economical ideas have confirmed the principles that have long prevailed in the commercial relations between nations. Belgium and the Netherlands are important markets of both consumption and production. Each of the two States is interested in the prosperity of the other. That furnishes, in our opinion, the true rule of their relations.

Carried out in a friendly and equitable manner, the suppression of the Scheldt tolls should destroy the last traces of former unpleasantness, and restore the common and natural tendency towards each other of the two nations in the direction of a greater and greater intimacy.

In the same order of ideas it was desirable that a definitive term should be put to the difficulties which have arisen with regard to the taking of water from the Meuse.

Lastly, the Customs relations of the two countries remained to some extent under sufferance. Netherlands produce was not treated on our side as that of the most favoured nation.

We approached these three questions, and we have settled them in the same spirit. In the several diplomatic acts which have just been signed at The Hague, we have seen the sure gage of a cordial and lasting friendship between the two peoples. In directing our negotiations with the Netherlands towards that object we were confident that we were doing what political reason demanded, and we feel assured also that we have at the same time carried out your wishes and those of the whole of Belgium.

But, gentlemen, is the political import of the results we have obtained limited to our relations with the Netherlands? Beyond that near and important interest, is it not permissible to take into account another of wider effect? In 1839 the Great European Powers combined to guarantee our independence and neutrality. Very shortly we shall convoke the representatives not only of the Powers who signed the treaty of 1839, but of all the States who have maritime relations with Belgium. In lending its concurrence to the purchase of the Scheldt tolls the Conference will undoubtedly render a service to trade generally. It will complete to the benefit of all nations the work commenced in the Sound and continued in the Elbe. Nor is this all. The foreign States will, by aiding Belgium in an enterprise which is known to be its legitimate desire and ambition, by giving this country and its venerated head a striking mark of sympathy, and by coming forward to sanction by their co-operation the henceforth perfect freedom of the Scheldt, bring a new consecration to the establishment of our nationality, and they will attach to it in some manner the imprint of universal solidarity.

The treaty with Holland was promptly ratified by the Belgian Chambers, whereupon invitations were issued for a Conference at Brussels on the subject of the Scheldt tolls. Twenty-one countries took part in it, and on 15th July, 1863, their representatives signed the treaty freeing the Scheldt. Belgium paid, including the shares of Denmark and Hanover, 13,328,000 francs; but Count Robiano shows in a carefully compiled table that if the tolls had not been redeemed she

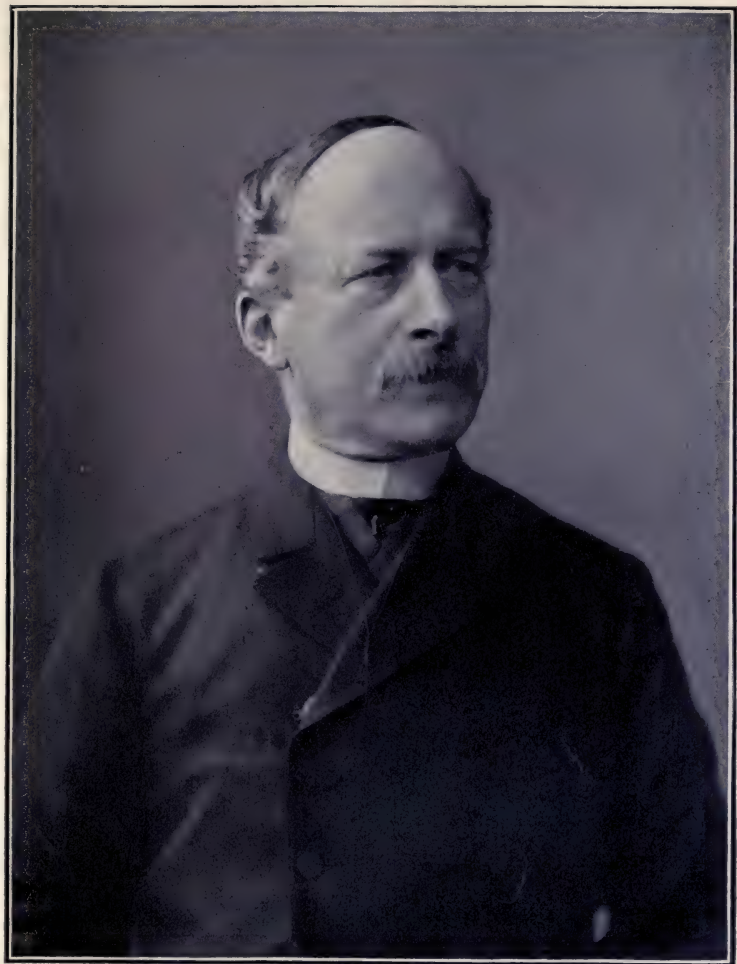
would have had to pay in the forty years from 1863 to 1903 not less than 574,523,317 francs, or nearly twenty-three millions sterling. This, of course, assumes that the trade of Antwerp would have increased under the régime of the tolls as rapidly as it did after their suppression. It is perhaps a sounder view to regard this putative saving as the evidence of the stifling influence the tolls had on the development of Antwerp's trade. The Belgians regard the freeing of the Scheldt as the final act in the liberation of their country, and it was highly appropriate that it should be consummated before the founder of their independence had passed away. *

The affairs of Antwerp suggest irresistibly the question of colonies. The colonial question, moreover, is much older in Belgium than those who imagine it to have been introduced by the founding of the Congo State suppose. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries many Belgians contributed to the commercial greatness of Holland, and it is affirmed that Corneille Hauteman, the founder of the famous Company of the Indies which was the forerunner of our own East India Company, was a citizen of Antwerp.† Without going back so far, or attempting to follow the course of events in any detail, a reference may be made to the work of the Ostend Company, which was an entirely Belgian undertaking. During the few years it existed (1717-31) it achieved a phenomenal success, and incurred the resentment of its English and Dutch rivals. The Emperor of Germany consented to cancel its Charter as part of the price to be paid for England's assent to the Pragmatic Sanction in favour of his daughter, the future Empress Maria Theresa.

During the subsistence of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

* Baron Lambermont received his title of Baron on the day of the signature of the treaty. In 1888 Antwerp celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the freeing of the Scheldt with a banquet and Venetian fête, when Lambermont was publicly identified with the achievement. In 1898 the centenary of the first freeing of the Scheldt by the French was celebrated, and again in 1901—Lambermont's own official jubilee. On both occasions he received ample proof of the nation's gratitude. In 1904 Lambermont died at the ripe age of eighty-five, honoured by everyone who was privileged to know him.

† Consult Baron A. de Haulleville's *Les Aptitudes colonisatrices des Belges*, etc., a very valuable work published at Brussels in 1898.



BARON LAMBERMONT.



the Belgians shared to some extent in the colonial enterprises of the Dutch. The white garrison of Java and Malacca, for instance, comprised a large Belgian contingent. When the severance of the two States occurred in 1830 the door of colonial activity was once more closed for the Belgians. King Leopold, in the very first days of his power, realised the evil, and often turned his thoughts towards its redress. In 1834 he declared that Belgium had need of fresh avenues of expansion, and he lost no occasion of trying to find them, whether they were great or small. About the year named he heard of a German scheme of founding a colony in Texas, which had only just been annexed by the United States, and he got his nephew, the Prince of Leiningen, to supply him with the facts, in case there should be an opening for Belgian co-operation. A few years later he instituted inquiries as to whether Spain would sell the Philippines to Belgium, and there is hardly any doubt that if his nephew had married Queen Isabella, the proposal, which was favourably entertained at Madrid, would have been carried out.

These were projects and ideas that never reached the stage of practical execution. Between 1840 and 1860 a considerable number of colonial schemes were actually attempted, and if they failed to achieve any permanent result, they were useful as providing the Belgian Foreign Office with practice in handling colonial questions. Thus, for instance, Belgian expeditions were fitted out for St. Thomas in Guatemala, and St. Catherine and St. Paul in Brazil. They did not attain their object, and the only successful Belgian colonists were those who went to the United States and Canada, where they founded little communities which they named after Belgian towns and provinces. Baron Lambermont had much to do with these efforts to tap the New World, and after the failure of the expedition to Guatemala, of which a very hopeful view had been taken, he wrote: "We shall only attain our end by perseverance, and by passing over all checks and the ruins of our schemes."

It was not only to America that the Belgian King looked for an outlet. China attracted his attention. In 1845 Belgium concluded a convention with that country on the basis of the

Treaty of Nanking. During the troubled period of 1858-60 the Belgian Government conceived the idea of getting possession of an islet near the mouth of the Yangtse-kiang as a base of trade. When that scheme failed to reach a practical form, it was proposed to secure a concession in the Island of Formosa, where it was conceived that the Chinese authorities would be very glad of European co-operation, more especially that of a small, unaggressive Power like Belgium. The Formosan scheme continued to find official favour and support long after King Leopold I.'s death, and, indeed, it was only abandoned when the Congo absorbed all Belgium's colonial aspirations and efforts after 1876.

After the Duke of Brabant's tour to India and China in 1858, King Leopold left his son the task of preaching and pushing the colonial propaganda. On his return from this journey, the Prince made, in February, 1860, a great speech in the Senate, of which he had become by the Constitution a member on his eighteenth birthday in 1853. This speech constituted the true starting-point of Belgium's colonial policy, which was destined to produce material results in the new reign ; but it may be quoted here as evidence that the colonial question was looming in the distance under Leopold I. :

" The possession of coasts and of a magnificent port, perhaps unique in the world, are the elements of wealth which we could not exploit too much, and which all the peoples who have enjoyed great fortune have largely made use of. I realise with profound conviction the extent of our resources, and I passionately hope that my fine country may have the boldness to draw from them all the advantages which I consider to be possible of realization.

" I think the time has come for us to expand abroad. I hold that there is no time to be lost unless we wish to see all the best positions, already scarce, occupied successively by more enterprising nations than ourselves. Trading stations and colonies have not only always well served the commercial interests of nations, but it is even to those establishments that the majority of them have owed their past or present greatness. . . .

“ You have to draw from the facts I have related the conclusions which appear to you the most in conformity with the requirements of our age and the interests of our country.

“ In the event of your approving some of the ideas that I have expressed, I hope that you will join your voices to mine, and draw the vigilant attention of the Government to these questions, the happy solution of which will exercise a potent influence on the political and material destiny of our country.”

In a second speech, addressed to the Senate in March, 1861, the Duke of Brabant said :

“ I claim for Belgium her fair share of the sea. . . . If the country were to consult its best friend, the one from whom it had received the strongest proofs of friendship and devotion, and to ask him, ‘ What should we do to raise the material and moral prosperity of the Kingdom to the highest point ? ’ such a friend would reply : ‘ Copy your neighbours ; extend yourselves across the sea on every possible occasion. You will find there valuable outlets for your produce ; a source of supply for your commerce, of occupation for the national activities which at present lie stagnant ; a useful place of refuge for your surplus population ; new revenues for the Treasury, which may perhaps some day admit of the Government following the example of the Netherlands and reducing taxation in the Mother Country ; and last, but not least, there must follow from the adoption of this course an increase of power, and an enhanced position in the eyes of the rest of Europe.’ ”

The intervention of the King and his eldest son in a question which in most countries would have been settled by private individuals is indirectly explained by a passage from one of King Leopold’s letters, written as far back as 1844 : “ We have to create everything *for* this country because private enterprise does next to nothing at all.” The holding back of the Belgians in matters of external expansion calling for prompt action and bold initiative is due, not to natural apathy, but to the caution verging on timidity arising from long and bitter experience as a community subject to alien rule. This national defect has not yet passed away, and explains why so many Belgians are anti-colonial and anti-expansionist to the present

day. It was also the reason explaining why the Government in the Congo was so long a "personal" rule, and not that of the Belgian Government. No one who has studied the question at all closely can have any doubt that if there had been no Leopold II. the Congo State would never have become a Belgian colony. The problem of the future is, Will the Belgians without their King be able to manage its affairs so as to permanently retain it?

It must, however, be remembered in justice that it was the first Leopold who pointed out the need for colonies and commercial expansion, on the ground that the European markets were surely, if slowly, drying up. But it was not only in the matter of colonies that Leopold I. looked beyond Belgium's narrow limits. He was always impressing on his advisers the necessity of the Belgians making a name for themselves in the world, and for that very reason he felt acutely the want of an occasion for wiping out the slur cast on the honour of the Belgian army by the unfortunate campaign of 1831. With that object in view he allowed the two Belgian corps to go to Portugal in 1832 and 1834, and he took the greatest interest in their fortunes. The good conduct of this little troop produced some impression generally, and the Duke of Saldanha, the Portuguese commander, testified to the courage of the Belgians on several occasions. The next occasion when King Leopold wished to send a Belgian contingent abroad was during the Anglo-French expedition to China in 1859-60, but he found the Constitutional impediments too many to allow of the prompt arrangements necessary to render the co-operation of Belgium with the allies feasible.

The third and most important occasion for the employment of a Belgian Legion on foreign service presented itself towards the end of the reign of Leopold I., but although the incident did not reach its close till after his successor had been on the throne nearly two years, the initiation of the step belonged entirely to the former Sovereign. In July, 1857, the Princess Charlotte of Belgium married the Archduke Maximilian, brother of the Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria. He was at the time Governor of the Austrian provinces in

Northern Italy. In 1861 England, France, and Spain intervened in Mexico, where a revolution, or rather a succession of revolutions, had brought President Juarez to the control of affairs. In 1862 England and Spain withdrew their forces, declining to carry on war in the interior. The Emperor Napoleon decided, however, that the interests and honour of France compelled her to carry on a war single-handed.

In the summer of 1863 the French troops occupied the capital city of Mexico, where an Assembly of Notables specially convened decided that the Government should be an hereditary Empire, and that the crown should be offered in the first place to the Archduke Maximilian. The crown was accepted, and in May, 1864, the Emperor Maximilian and the Empress Charlotte arrived in their new dominion. A few weeks before their arrival the Washington House of Representatives passed a resolution to the effect that the United States would never recognise the establishment of a new Monarchy on the ruins of an old Republic on the continent of America. At that moment the War of Secession had practically ended with the triumph of the Northern States, which had not been anticipated in either Paris or Brussels. The prevalent idea in most European capitals was that if the South did not triumph over the North it would at least maintain a separate autonomy. This was the opinion upon which the French Government acted when it first took up the Mexican adventure, and the Emperor Napoleon was then quite willing to ally himself with the Confederates against the Federals if he could have induced England to join him in committing such a foolish and reprehensible act.

When the Emperor Maximilian accepted the throne, it was understood that the French forces would evacuate Mexico at the earliest possible moment, and that a new Imperial army would be created. As the nucleus of this force, a special Austro-Belgian contingent was formed. It numbered 10,000 men, of whom the Belgian Legion consisted of 2,000. This corps sailed in two bodies on 15th October, 1864, and 15th January, 1865. Fighting continued after the coronation of Maximilian, and the Belgian Legion was constantly engaged in the guerilla warfare, which, although generally successful for French

arms, was marked by some reverses. One of these befel a portion of the Belgian Legion at Tacambaro on 11th April, 1865. The French commanders adopted the vicious system of holding a large number of places with small garrisons. Tacambaro was entrusted to 500 Belgians under Major Tydgadt. One of Juarez's lieutenants, General Regulus, attacked it with 3,000 men. The Belgians made a stout defence, holding out as long as their ammunition lasted, when the survivors surrendered. Writing on this affair, King Leopold said: "I have read with great attention the report of Colonel Potier. It shows the heroic courage of our handful of troops. The feat was glorious for a people who, since 1831, have had no occasion of showing that spirit without which, alas! there is no such thing as a people, for it is without means of resistance. I cannot refrain, as one of the oldest Generals, if not the oldest General living, from deploring the system followed by some military men of sending out a few heroic troops, as in this case, exposing them to no purpose, and encouraging the enemy, who know the localities. The system ought never to be followed."

The reverse at Tacambaro was quickly retrieved, General Regulus being defeated a fortnight later at Yanijuco by a joint Franco-Belgian force. The greatest Belgian success* was achieved on 16th July at the Loma River, where a Mexican force of over 3,500 men was defeated, with the loss of many prisoners. These were exchanged for the survivors of Major Tydgadt's detachment. The Belgian Legion left Mexico in January, 1867. On its departure, Marshal Bazaine, in chief command of the French army, issued the following order of the day:

"The Belgian Volunteer Legion is about to return to Europe. Before separating from this *corps d'élite*, the French Marshal Commanding-in-Chief feels bound to make himself the spokesman for the whole of the French expeditionary force of the high esteem which it has gained during this long campaign.

"Officers and soldiers!

"You have borne your part in the labours and struggles

* King Leopold wrote of this on 3rd September, 1865: "This last fight (Loma) of the Belgians was a glorious affair. It is of enormous importance for the reputation of the country. Yet there is a party which will not admit this!"

of the war in Mexico. Your valour in combat, your discipline under the fatigue of long marches, have conferred honour on the Belgian name abroad. At the moment of embarking for your own country, accept the adieux of your brothers-in-arms of the French Expedition. In a few weeks you will see the shores of your own country. You will preserve there, I hope, a good recollection of those who suffered and fought at your sides, and of the French Marshal who had the honour of commanding you."

The Empress Charlotte returned to Europe in September, 1866, in the vain hope of inducing the Emperor Napoleon to leave his troops longer in Mexico; and shortly after they were withdrawn the unfortunate Emperor Maximilian was betrayed and shot at Queretaro on 19th June, 1867. The still more unfortunate Empress Charlotte lost her reason from the shock caused by her husband's tragic fate. King Leopold I. was mercifully spared the anguish that his daughter's affliction and the failure of the Mexican adventure would have caused him. He had died while its difficulties were developing, and before it had been made clear that the Mexican Empire would not flourish. The Mexican expedition is referred to here because it furnished the young Belgian army with an occasion for displaying some of the prowess which distinguished the older national corps in foreign service.*

* The details of the campaign are given in General Rouen's *Armée Belge*. A fine monument by G. Geefs to the men who fell at Tacambaro was erected at Audenarde, and another to the whole Legion stands at the Belgian training camp at Beverloo. Among the Belgian officers who specially distinguished themselves during the campaign was the present General Baron Wahis, some time Governor-General of the Congo.

CHAPTER XVIII.

King Leopold's Last Days.

KING LEOPOLD had always been a strong, healthy, and active man, but, like the robust generation to which he belonged, he was somewhat neglectful of minor precautions. He was a great walker, a great sportsman, and one who improved upon Lord Palmerston's axiom that the secret of good health was to be four hours a day in the open air. The King's favourite relaxation was to take up his residence at the Château d'Ardenne, where, from his residence, a solitary tower overlooking the Lesse, he wrote some of his most interesting letters and State papers. In the winter he spent much of his time shooting deer, wild boar, and other game in the fine woods that belonged to the royal domain which at one time had formed part of the famous Ardennes Forest. No weather was too bad to prevent his enjoying his day's sport, even after he had exceeded what is called the allotted span of man. In the summer and early autumn he generally took a brief holiday on the Italian lakes, where he had rented the Villa Giulia on Lake Como, but to the Ardennes he escaped from the somewhat confined life of Brussels as often as he could.

Up to his seventieth year King Leopold does not seem to have suffered from any complaint beyond a little bronchitis, but about that period he began to complain of internal pains, and finding that "a cure" at Vichy did him no good, and that the Belgian doctors had some difficulty in diagnosing his complaint, he sent to London for Mr.—afterwards Sir Henry—Thompson, who ascertained that the King was suffering from stone. He performed the operation of lithotritry several times, and undoubt-

edly benefited his patient very greatly. The King, in one of his letters (24th March, 1863), describes this phase : " I have been now for thirteen months suffering the most atrocious pain ;" and in another (3rd June) : " I continue to suffer a great deal. . . . I have a very good English doctor, Mr. Thompson, in whom I feel great confidence. He, too, is of opinion that if I had been last year under care in a hospital I should have been cured in two or three months, and here I am at the fifteenth month without a distinct prospect of a cure, seeing the extreme difficulty at getting at one of the pieces."

In 1864 the King was still suffering, although he made no change in his ordinary habits, visiting the Ardennes in the regular way for the boar-shooting. The following extracts from his correspondence relate to the state of his health at this period : " When I left Laeken I was not very well, and the weather, which is so very cold, has done me no good. . . . You sleep too little ; with your brain-work sleep is indispensable. I also suffer in that way, especially during the last two months, but I manœuvre with extreme patience to get just a little bit of sleep. My health has not yet arrived at the state it was in last October, but I try to subdue my temper. Sometimes that is not easy."

The King had been advised by his doctors not to allow public matters to irritate him, more especially as the King's character was prone to wrath when he found his Ministers dwelling and expatiating on trivialities of all kinds instead of seizing and considering the main points alone. He found the doctrinaire theories of M. Frère-Orban especially trying, and the only way in which he supported the co-operation of his responsible Ministers during the Liberal régime was by seeing as little of them as possible. Everything was done by correspondence, or through the mediation of his well-tried secretary, M. Van Praet. Even M. Rogier sometimes declared that he had not had an audience of the King for months, and M. Frère-Orban was still less favoured. The only Minister of these later days in whom the King felt any confidence was General Chazal, to whom he wrote in terms of " immutable affection." The

following extracts from letters written in the last year of his life to this tried Minister and friend are touching :

LAEKEN, *2nd January, 1865.*

MY VERY DEAR MINISTER,

Accept my most tender thanks for the wishes you so nobly express. You know how I love you, and the high esteem I feel for you. You have no rival in my heart. My friendship for you will last as long as I exist on this troubled planet of ours, and, in spite of free-thinkers, I hope beyond that. With immutable affection,

YOURS, LEOPOLD.

WINDSOR CASTLE, *15th April, 1865.*

I have been exceedingly ill. I have been incessantly on the point of inflammation on the chest. I am determined to leave on the 18th, but it is not unattended with danger. I have never been so uncomfortable here. I have not been out one single time, and for several days I was quite confined to my room. It is to be hoped I shall get over it, but I certainly have not done so yet. Heaven preserve you ! Ever with my old and faithful friendship,

LEOPOLD.

LAEKEN, *12th May, 1865.*

If only the weather had been tolerable my blindness in this fearful season of March might have improved, but it was as if a demon were exclusively occupied in my destruction. What a strange thing is existence ! We must wait and see what Heaven wills. Since November, 1864, I have had dreadful cause to complain [referring to party politics in Belgium—see Chapter XV.], and that has done me a great deal of harm.

LAEKEN, *12th October, 1865.*

I heard that you were not satisfied with the state of your health. I had hoped that the beautiful country would do you good. . . . You know all of this. It is the result of the difficulties which political parties create for their own game without troubling themselves whether they are not doing the greatest harm to their own country.

With some extracts from a letter to an ex-Minister the quotations from King Leopold's correspondence may be ended. King Leopold never forgot a friend or a Minister who had rendered him a service. Among the men whom he had trusted in the time of their activity was Henri de Brouckère, who wrote on 20th July, 1865, congratulating the King on the thirty-fourth anniversary of his inauguration. The King replied at once :

LAEKEN, *21st July, 1865.*

MY DEAR MINISTER,

I was mildly affected by the sentiments expressed towards me in your affectionate letter. We still are left of that period of union which had its bright side, and which is now wholly changed. You have remained a faithful and successful defender of the elements of our political existence. I hope that equal success will attend all your noble efforts. My health has been much shattered by this wretched weather. It is more than thirty-four years since I was first engaged with you in founding this State, to-day so prosperous, but then beset by peril.

We have quoted a good many extracts from King Leopold's letters of autobiographical interest. We may now give perhaps the most interesting and true-to-life impression of the King, by one who knew him, that was ever penned. We owe this sketch to M. Charles Faider, who was Minister of Justice in the De Brouckère Cabinet of 1852. The King consulted him in January, 1864, on the political crisis of the day, and gave him an audience of over two hours. Some years after the King's death M. Faider published the following account of the impression the King made on him on this occasion, and also his appreciation of the King's character :

Though much tried by lingering pain, he had the old uprightness, the old firmness and nobility of attitude, the old kingly bearing. I was, as I had always been, struck with that cold but courteous kindness which marked his official relations. He first discussed seriously the matters which occupied at this time the minds of all ; he enunciated his own views, estimated the value of opinions, passed judgment on men and measures, argued out and laid down conclusions. He had still all the vigour of his character, and all the freshness of his mind : then, quitting the grave and serious, as apparently done with, he turned the conversation and gave himself up little by little to that quiet gaiety which was part of his nature, and the expression of which, with its mixture of plentiful anecdote and keen irony, had an irresistible charm.

I have recalled this interview, because I readily recognised at it what I had always observed in this extraordinary man—a real intelligence in affairs, which he reviewed with calmness and lucidity ; a mixture of passionateness and calm ; great ability in weighing men and setting their characters in a clear light ; a quiet gaiety couched in picturesque language ; irony, sometimes cutting, but always without bitterness ; some hankering after literary reminiscences and recondite anecdotes ; a gaiety of the right stamp terminating an interview begun under the influence of serious preoccupations. There you had the whole man : uniting all mental qualities, discussing grave questions, pausing for reflection, disclosing all his intellectual graces, his innumerable reminiscences, and his delicate vein of pleasantry. . . .

He was a man of infinite mental gifts, and I may repeat what has often been said, that he was more gifted than the most gifted of his advisers. He made few objections, because his comprehension was quick and deep ; he asked few questions ; he obtained his due without need of asserting himself ; he temporised when he was not satisfied ; he showed himself, in the regular routine of business, a truly Constitutional King, assured of his Ministers' honesty, and respecting their responsibility.

He never injured anybody ; he had no feeling of vengeance ; he never in his life inflicted a wound or gave offence. No doubt he did not like everyone who served him, and he did not reign thirty-five years without feeling resentment or anger. I may even assert that his anger was terrible, and at such times his sharp, deep eye, a little veiled, was filled with piercing flashes ; but he soon recovered, and the idea of vengeance did not enter into his mind ; his vengeance was confined to a sarcasm which was sometimes unequalled for keenness.

He was naturally indulgent ; he liked to exercise his prerogative of mercy ; he himself added postscripts to petitions delivered to him by persons he liked ; he never authorised an execution without long hesitation and cruel anguish ; he studied with care the papers and reports before refusing to a great criminal

a commutation of sentence. He exercised liberally the charity too often begged in the sphere of royalty. He was disinclined to the prosecution of slanderers and ignorant writers who dared to libel him; he felt he was too much loved and too lofty to seek a legal remedy against them. He felt sure of being sufficiently avenged of insolent pamphleteers by the judgment of the country and posterity.

In addition to his own illness and the recrimination of party strife to which he had to listen in silence, King Leopold experienced during the last four years of his reign a good many troubles and anxieties. The premature and wholly unexpected death of his nephew, the Prince Consort, on 14th December, 1861, was a great blow for him, and after the funeral, which was attended by his two sons, he paid a special visit to Osborne to console his niece, Queen Victoria, in her irreparable loss. At her reiterated requests not to leave her during the first pangs of her bereavement, he remained with her on this occasion seven weeks, and he made a promise, despite his poor health, to pay a visit to England every year. In August, 1863, Queen Victoria, accompanied by two of her sons and daughters, paid a visit to the King at Laeken on her way to visit the Princess Alice at Darmstadt. Even in 1865, the year of his death, King Leopold came to England and his letter from Windsor during this last visit to General Chazal has been quoted.

King Leopold was somewhat anxious on international questions, and the attack upon little Denmark in 1864 by the two Great Powers, Austria and Prussia, made him draw an analogy for Belgium. But the time was approaching, he recognised, for him to leave these questions of international rivalry and contention to those who were to come after him. To the close of his career he had discharged his first duty in maintaining the integrity and neutrality of the country of which in no uncertain sense he was the true founder.

The warning of his own approaching end was furnished by the gradual disappearance of the men who had been associated with him in the earlier events of his reign. Felix de Mérode had died some years before. In 1865 Joseph Lebeau, who perhaps did most of any to save Belgium from disruption in 1831, and whose services were, and are still, the

least appreciated of all by his countrymen, passed away in the quiet seclusion of the modest retirement he preferred. He sought no distinction, he claimed no reward, and he died poor. The same year (October, 1865) witnessed the disappearance of another man, not a Belgian, who might fairly claim to have played his part well as one of those who had made Belgium. This was Lord Palmerston, of whom it might be truly said that whatever the London Conference did of the practical was his handiwork.

In November, 1865, King Leopold, ignoring the advice of his doctors, decided to pay his usual visit to the Ardennes. He happened to feel particularly well at the moment, and when remonstrated with, he replied that if he found it did not agree with him he would not go again. The words were in a sense prophetic. He had not spent many days there before he caught a chill, became alarmingly ill, and was brought back in haste to Laeken. For a few days it was thought to be nothing serious, but on 2nd December the official Gazette announced that the King was seriously ill. A day or two later it became clear that he was not likely to recover, and on 10th December his sons and their children were summoned to his chamber. The Ministers also were sent for, as it was no longer possible to conceal the fact that the end was at hand. King Leopold remained conscious and rational till almost the last. Noticing M. Van Praet, who had been his private secretary throughout his reign, near the bedside, he held out his hand, and pressed his warmly. Then, seeing the Viscount de Conway, who had been in charge of the Civil List for almost as many years, he beckoned to him, pressed his hand, and called him his dear friend, in German. It was noted as a curious circumstance that during the last week of his illness the King, who in private life had preferred to speak English, reverted to German, the language of his childhood. After these farewells to his own personal attendants, the King placed his hand between the two hands of the Duchess of Brabant (afterwards Queen Marie Henriette), who breathed some words of love and devotion in his ear, and then quietly, and with scarcely the semblance of a struggle, the first King of the Belgians passed away.

Immediately on the death being officially attested, the Ministry, who by the Constitution assumed the government until the new ruler had taken the oath, issued the following Proclamation :

“ Belgium has lost the King who shared her fortunes with unalterable devotion during the whole course of a long, peaceful, and glorious reign.

“ After struggling heroically with the physical sufferings he had to fight against in the latter years of his life, he has finally been vanquished by death—he whom Belgium in her grief and her gratitude had already proclaimed the father of the country.

“ The Belgian people, full of veneration for the memory of the wise and loyal monarch whose loss it mourns, will, faithful to itself, await with confidence the approach of the day when the representatives of the nation will take the oath to the heir to the throne.

“ To guarantee to Belgium her liberty, her prosperity, and her independence, Leopold II., who has already won the hearts of the people, will follow the great example of his illustrious father, and he will find the whole nation united to support him energetically in the accomplishment of his noble and patriotic duty.”

The King's funeral was celebrated with great solemnity on 16th December, and it was attended by many illustrious personages, including the Prince of Wales, now His Majesty King Edward VII. King Leopold I. was buried in the Royal Crypt of the church at Laeken, beside his second wife, Queen Louise, and the ceremony was according to the Protestant ritual ; for King Leopold, although ruling a Catholic country, whose Constitution, moreover, stipulates that the Sovereign must be a member of the Church of Rome, had never changed his religion, although by his marriage contract he consented to his children being brought up in the old faith. The two most touching tributes to King Leopold's memory were paid by Queen Victoria and his own son. On the monument Queen Victoria erected to his memory in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, beside the cenotaph of the Princess Charlotte, his niece.



GENERAL CHAZAL.



caused the inscription to be placed : " This monument was raised by Queen Victoria to the memory of the uncle who held the place of a father in her affections." The first words in the address to the Belgian people of King Leopold II. on mounting the throne were : " Belgium, like myself, has lost a father."

It is as the founder and consolidator of the Belgian Kingdom, which enshrines the independence and national existence of the Belgian people, that the first King Leopold will live in history. He placed a very modest estimate on his own services when he said to the National Congress : " Gentlemen, you made Belgium ; I introduced her to Europe." It might be more justly claimed for him that, while some Belgians had before his arrival laid the possible foundations of Belgian independence, he, by his wisdom and close acquaintance with the policies of the different Powers, prevented other Belgians from wrecking, by their impetuosity and indifference to every consideration but the gratification of their own opinions, what had been achieved. While he could be as firm and unyielding in appearance as the most extreme upholder of Belgium's rights, he knew how to accept the inevitable with good grace and the determination to make the best of it.

In Belgium, during the whole of the controversy with Holland, he had a most difficult part to play. He arrived in Belgium as the bearer, so to speak, of the Eighteen Articles which conceded much, if not everything, to Belgian aspirations. Events over which he had no control, and in which he played nothing but a highly honourable and even glorious part, destroyed both the Articles and the aspirations. But King Leopold was resolved that, even to save his throne, not a word should come from him sanctioning, or even encouraging, the belief that in his inner mind he admitted the necessity of the surrender of Belgian claims over the whole of Luxembourg and Limburg. Before he accepted the throne, he declared that he would never do so if he had to acquiesce in the loss of territory by the people who elected him. He said so in the case of Greece ; he said it still more emphatically in the case of Belgium. He obtained a guarantee which seemed conclusive, but events nullified it. When Belgium had to make the sacri-

fice, he stood aside, leaving the decision in the hands of the Parliamentary powers. After the acceptance of the Twenty-four Articles he waited with exemplary patience, in the hope that the Dutch King's prolonged obstinacy would play the game into his hands, and leave the Belgians in the position of *beati possidentes*. When the surrender had finally to be made, no one dared to blame the King; not a voice was raised to recall the fact that one of the stipulations of his election had been the preservation of Belgium's territorial integrity.

A more delicate subject of inquiry is suggested by the question whether the ambition of King Leopold was fully satisfied by the work and dignity of a King of the Belgians. When he read through the Belgian Constitution before accepting the throne, he remarked rather caustically that "very little had been left for a King to do." So long as the controversy with Holland, however, remained unsettled, there was constant employment for his active mind in the way of military preparation and diplomatic exertion, and he had no cause to complain of lack of interesting work. So long as Holland had not signed the definitive treaty the Belgian question continued to be one of the first magnitude in the councils of Europe. King Leopold had to watch every move on the political chessboard. But after 1839 the question of the external relations of the country became less engrossing. Belgium was made, and generally recognised. She had to justify her creation and prolong her existence by internal development, and by proving to the world that she not merely merited, but knew how to utilise wisely, her independence. King Leopold, having assisted in her creation and consolidation, watched most carefully over her reputation. He desired that the public life, as well as the material prosperity, of Belgium should stand out as a model to her neighbours, but at the same time he was most averse to the practice that grew up with the development of the press of criticising the proceedings of other Governments. The attacks on the Napoleonic régime in France, which filled a certain section of the Brussels press, caused him annoyance and alarm—annoyance because he thought that the Belgians had quite enough to do in attending to their own affairs; alarm

because he feared that the Emperor might seek to gratify his ambition at the expense of Belgium.

If the indiscretions and inflated language of some Belgian journalists annoyed him, he was still more displeased and disturbed at the excesses of the Liberal Party. He held them to be an abuse of the transitory power which the accidental results of the voting urns placed for a time in the hands of one party at the expense of the other. He was not at all in sympathy with the practice of governing by rival parties anywhere, but in Belgium he felt it to be particularly hazardous and injurious; and if he could have had his way, he would have liked to have had Ministers who did not sit in the Chambers at all. His natural dislike of the party system was heightened by the evidence he acquired in the course of his long reign that the leaders, in their anxiety to gain or retain power, to carry out a pet scheme, to establish a principle, forgot the true needs of the country. He once said: "You, gentlemen, devote yourselves to your ideals; I have to look after the State."

But if King Leopold disapproved of many of the measures passed by his Ministers, if he saw with an uneasy mind the encroachments made on religion, on the independence of the individual citizen, on the institutions that were established by the Constitution, he was still more disturbed and incensed even when he found the majority of his Ministers trifling with the vital question of the country's defence. He had hoped better things of the Catholic or Conservative Party, but when it took up the narrow views of the Party of Meeting at Antwerp in opposition to the necessary extension of the fortifications of that city, he lost faith in its judgment, and made no move to assist its attainment of power in 1863.

It was on the question of Belgium's military security that King Leopold felt most strongly, and about which nearly all Belgian politicians outside the army were, and are, most ignorant and self-deluded. To judge from the speeches of her Frère-Orbans and Malous, Belgium is protected by a rampart of parchment, which no enemy would be so unkind as to pierce or level with the ground. These politicians ignore all the circumstances under which Belgium came into being—the keen

rivalry, the hostile grouping of the Powers, the threat to resort to force, the scarcely concealed wish to end all discussion by breaking up Belgium and dividing her among themselves. These views and ambitions did not die in 1832; they are still, *mutatis mutandis*, in force. Yet Belgian politicians have always seemed unable or unwilling to face these truths. Their blindness to the most obvious facts was the despair of King Leopold. He once said to his Ministers: "I beg of you to remember that the least invasion of the country by foreign forces would not only cost it hundreds of millions, but, what is still more precious, it might cost it its *political existence*; for to believe, if it were once occupied by foreign forces, that those forces would ever evacuate it would be to wantonly cherish an inexcusable delusion. 1831 must never be forgotten! A country could not *twice* expose itself to such a danger *without perishing*."

King Leopold looked at the question of Belgium's security, in which is involved her continued existence as an independent State, with the eye of a soldier as well as a Sovereign. He never forgot his military training or his experiences in the field during the great European struggle of 1812-15. He summed up in his mind the chances of defence and invasion, and, as a rule, his judgment inclined to the view that those of the latter were the better. Hence his desire to convert Antwerp into a place of final stand, the refuge for the dynasty and the Government, in the hour of peril. He had no erroneous views as to the true character of the neutrality with which the Powers had endowed Belgium. It was a neutrality that had to be defended. She owed her friends the obligation that she should be able to contribute adequately and effectively to her own defence when, and even before, they came to her aid; but she owed a still greater duty to herself.

In 1815 the Belgians were frankly, if brutally, told by the Powers that they had not done enough for themselves to justify independence being conferred upon them. In 1831 the promises made to Belgium were flagrantly broken because she sustained military reverses. Such experiences ought to be enough to prevent any further delusions about the need there



H.M. KING LEOPOLD I. IN 1863.



is for Belgium to be well prepared to resist invasion. King Leopold laid down principles which are of permanent force. They are as applicable to-day as when they were uttered nearly sixty years ago : " Belgium requires a sufficient army and a properly prepared defensive system to deter anyone from attacking her. If Belgium is strong enough to repel the first onset on any side, no one will attack her. The only inducement to do so is the conviction that success will be easy and rapid. If it is seen that success will be neither, no attack will be made, for it would be only to give the assailant a fresh enemy." While the principles enunciated in this statement remain as true as when uttered, the measures required to execute them have to be enlarged. In the time of Leopold I. an army of 100,000 effectives was quite sufficient ; in 1909 at least three times that number are required for the same work, owing to the enormous increase in the military establishments of France and Germany.

Although King Leopold I. did not endow Belgium with a colony, he was keenly alive to the necessity of extending its commercial relations beyond the limits of Europe. He took a more pessimistic view of the approaching exhaustion or limitation of Europe's resources than events have as yet confirmed, but there can be no doubt of the correctness of his argument that only those nations would endure which found or created openings for their surplus produce and population. He once said : " Belgium is like a boiler that requires relief-pipes." But, having indicated the necessity for a Belgian colony, he passed this particular subject on to his son, who, long before he came to the throne in 1865, had been giving his best thoughts and all his attention to the subject of acquiring some unappropriated island, sphere, or concession where he might lay the foundation of a new and greater Belgium across the ocean. This project was not to be realised for many years, and then under circumstances that belong to the reign of Leopold II.

There is some ground for thinking that for a few years after 1850 King Leopold was not wholly satisfied with his position as Belgian King. In 1848 he had offered to abdicate, not merely for himself, but for his family, if his Ministers

thought it would either please or benefit the country for him to do so. In 1857 he was quite willing to put down mob-law by appealing to the army, and to enforce the will of the majority. Troops were on the march from all the garrison towns for Brussels, when his Ministers quailed at the prospect of a revolution. King Leopold would not have gone out of his way to risk losing his crown, if it had seemed to him a thing infinitely precious or absolutely secure. The party feuds irritated him ; the sweeping programme of the Liberals in office, the still more sweeping proposals of the Radicals, who might be in office before long, alarmed him, and inspired him with no confidence in the security of the throne. Since his time Belgium, as it were, has steadied herself ; new forces have come into life ; society has looked over the brink of the precipice marked Socialism, and drawn back. Leopold I. had no such guarantees. He had seen Charles X. and Louis Philippe swept from their thrones in a single day. He had no positive reason for thinking that what had happened in France in 1830 and 1848 might not happen in Belgium, where, as he sometimes said, the King stood lonely and apart.

With very few exceptions, King Leopold was not in close touch or great sympathy with the leaders of Belgian political life. There always seemed to him something petty and parhisional in their views. The greatest compliment he ever bestowed on any of the Belgians who worked for him was to tell them that they were taking a broader view of things, and that they were realising that the opinion of Brussels was, after all, not that of the whole world. But if he was ever sceptical of the merits of the men who filled the public eye as party leaders, he was most prompt and generous in recognising and encouraging true ability and personal devotion. The cordiality of his correspondence with the men of his choice shows how warm and durable was his friendship. He never forgot a service, and the men attached to his household were personally devoted to him, and served him for their lives. If King Leopold had no love for, or faith in, the professional politician, he had a great affection and admiration for the Belgian people in the mass. He soon detected and fully appreciated their

sterling qualities, their love of honest labour, their quiet endurance under the harsh conditions of life, their cheery readiness to give and take in the struggle of existence. Notwithstanding all the trials and hardships of their long, chequered national history, they had come down almost uncontaminated and unspoiled through the dark centuries to enjoy the blessing, the pleasure, and the pride of national independence.

On the subject of the existence of Belgium as a Kingdom King Leopold often spoke well and to the point—never better, perhaps, than when he said, after declaring that “his whole reign had been entirely dedicated to the existence of the country”: “We have now springing up on Belgian soil the second generation since the proclamation of national independence. During these long years of peace Belgium has occupied a position often envied by other nations. She owes it, above all, to the moderation which it gives me pleasure to acknowledge is one of the distinctive traits of the Belgian character. As long as I live I will serve as a shield to Belgium. But that this moderation, that our handsome behaviour with respect to other nations, may be appreciated, Belgium must be compact in itself, must be something more than an agglomeration of provinces. It must have a centre of action.” The reference is to Antwerp as a national centre and place of final stand.

If King Leopold I. ever allowed himself the satisfaction of surveying the work he had done with a sense of approval, it was when he thought of the share that he had had in bringing one of the oldest races in Europe to the full enjoyment of its political existence, and on the few rare occasions of national rejoicing he received from the fervour of the popular demonstration the impression that his work had been appreciated where he most desired to see it—in the hearts of the people.

Justice has often been rendered to King Leopold I. for his moderating influence in the councils of the nations, and in his later years he was sometimes called the Nestor of Europe. But we have here to consider him only in his character as King of the Belgians. In the making of modern Belgium he took the chief and the controlling part. It might never have been made if he had been less wise or foreseeing, if his courage had

failed or his patience been exhausted. He saw with unerring judgment the only way to success, and he guided the efforts of his agents in London and Paris for its attainment. He realised that Lord Palmerston was a true friend to Belgium and himself, and he gripped him with the proverbial bands of steel. He knew that the Duke of Wellington, the friend and military teacher of the Prince of Orange, might prove a formidable enemy, and he spared no effort himself or through his emissaries to mollify his opposition, to soothe his susceptibilities, and to flatter his vanity, until at last Wellington grew convinced that he too, not less than Palmerston, was one of the architects of Belgium. These achievements imply more than mere cleverness. They required a rare knowledge of men, extreme accuracy in measuring the amount of time needed to produce a definite result, the patience to wait for it, the decision to know when to temporise, when to stand firm, and, most difficult of all, when to yield.

It is the highest tribute to a ruler's capacity to say that he shows himself equal to his mission, but it may be said of King Leopold I. that he was even superior to it. The affairs of a small country, which in his time contained something over four millions of people, were not so wholly engrossing for an intellect whose experience had been gained on the large stage of European politics in the stormy days of the First Empire, and whose activities in later life controlled to some degree the secret councils of the Constitutional Powers of our Continent. If he had not had those outside distractions and occupations, time would often have hung heavily on his hands; but as the repository of many of the family and political secrets of his royal relatives, as the oracle to whom they all turned in the hour of trouble and difficulty, his leisure was small, and he had no time to be oppressed by the reflection that the rôle of the ruler of a small country has painful limitations for a man of his ambition and genius.

The book of Belgium's history as an independent State lies open; only the first chapters have been written; no one can foretell what will be inscribed on the unturned pages. But it will not be denied that the first phase of her national making

proved her deserving of what she achieved under the guidance of Leopold I. ; and as she deserved freedom, her merit may carry with it the guerdon of future peace, security, and independence. But she cannot be either happy or free unless she is strong and ready to defend herself. To learn how to do that, she has only to turn to the exhortations of her first King, and to enforce them in practice, and with due regard for the greater requirements of the new age.

APPENDIX.

The Twenty-four Articles.

Treaty of 15th November, 1831.

THE Courts of Austria, France, Great Britain, Prussia, and Russia, taking into consideration the events which have taken place in the United Kingdom of the Netherlands since the month of September, 1830, the obligation they lie under of preventing those events from disturbing the general peace, and the necessity, resulting from these events, of applying some modifications to the transactions of 1815, whereby was created and established the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, and H.M. the present King of the Belgians being a party to these intentions of the Courts above mentioned, have named for their Plenipotentiaries, to wit :

H.M. the King of the Belgians, Sieur Sylvain Van de Weyer, his Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to His Britannic Majesty ;

H.M. the Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary and Bohemia ;

Prince Paul d'Esterhazy, Knight of the Golden Fleece, etc., now a Privy Councillor of His Imperial and Royal Apostolic Majesty, and his Ambassador Extraordinary to His Britannic Majesty ;

And Sieur John Philip Baron de Wessenberg, Grand Cross of the Royal Order of St. Stephen, etc., Chamberlain, now a Privy Councillor of his Imperial and Royal Apostolic Majesty ;

H.M. the King of the French, Sieur Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, Prince-Duke de Talleyrand, peer of France, Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of his said Majesty to his Britannic Majesty, Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour, etc., etc., etc. ;

H.M. the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, the Right Honourable Henry John Viscount Palmerston, Baron Temple, peer of Ireland, of his Britannic Majesty's Privy Council, Member of Parliament, and his principal Secretary of State having the Department of Foreign Affairs ;

H.M. the King of Prussia, Sieur Henry William Baron de Bulow, his Chamberlain, Privy Councillor of Legation, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to his Britannic Majesty, and Knight of several orders ;

And H.M. the Emperor of All the Russias ;

Sieur Christopher, Prince de Lieven, General of Infantry in his armies, his Aide-de-camp-General, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to his Britannic Majesty, Knight of the Orders of Russia, etc. ;

And Sieur Adam, Baron Matuszewic, Privy Councillor of his said Majesty, Knight of the Order of St. Anne, of the First Class, etc. ;

Who, having exchanged their full powers, found in good and due form, have concluded and signed the Articles which follow :*

* The first Twenty-four Articles are in textual conformity with the Twenty-four Articles of the Treaty of Separation of 15th October, 1831.

ARTICLE 1.

The Belgian territory consists of the provinces of South Brabant, Liège, Namur, Hainaut, West Flanders, East Flanders, Antwerp, and Limburg, such as they were when part of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, established in 1815, with the exception of the districts of the Province of Limburg designated in Article 4. The Belgian territory shall, moreover, comprise that part of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg specified in Article 2.

ARTICLE 2.

H.M. the King of the Netherlands, Grand Duke of Luxembourg, consents that in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg the boundaries of Belgian territory be such as they are about to be described below.

Starting from the frontier of France, between *Rodange*, which shall remain in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and *Athus*, which shall belong to Belgium, there shall be drawn, according to the chart here annexed, a line which, leaving to Belgium the road from *Arlon* to *Longwy*, the town of *Arlon* with its district, and the road from *Arlon* to *Bastogne*, shall pass between *Messancy*, which will be in Belgian territory, and *Clemency*, which will remain in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, to end at *Steinfort*, which place will likewise remain in the Grand Duchy; from *Steinfort* this line shall be prolonged in the direction of *Eischen*, from *Hecbus*, *Guirsch*, *Oberpalen*, *Grende*, *Nothomb*, *Pareth*, and *Perlé*, up to *Martelange*; *Hecbus*, *Guirsch*, *Grende*, *Nothomb*, and *Pareth* to belong to Belgium, and *Eischen*, *Oberpalen*, *Perlé*, and *Martelange* to the Grand Duchy. From *Martelange* the said line shall descend the course of the *Sûre*, of which the *thalweg* (waterway) shall serve for boundary between the two States as far as opposite to *Tintange*, whence it shall be prolonged as directly as possible towards the present frontier of the arrondissement of *Diekirch*, and shall pass between *Surret*, *Harlange*, and *Tarchamps*, which it will leave to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and *Honville*, *Livarchamp*, and *Loutermange*, which will form part of the Belgian territory; then, reaching in the neighbourhood of *Doncols* and of *Sonlez*, which will remain in the Grand Duchy, the present frontier of the arrondissement of *Diekirch*, the line in question shall follow the said frontier as far as that of the Prussian territory. All the territories, towns, forts, and places situated to the west of this line shall belong to Belgium, and all territories, towns, forts, and places situated to the east of this same line shall continue to belong to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

It is understood that in tracing this line, and in conforming as closely as possible to the description which has been given above, as well as to the indications in the chart, added for greater clearness to the present Article, the demarcation commissioners, of whom mention is made in Article 5, will have regard to localities as well as to considerations of convenience which may result therefrom reciprocally.

ARTICLE 3.

H.M. the King of the Netherlands, Grand Duke of Luxembourg, shall receive for the cessions made in the preceding Articles a territorial indemnity in the province of Limburg.

ARTICLE 4.

In execution of the part of Article 1 relative to the province of Limburg, and in consequence of cessions which H.M. the King of the Netherlands makes by Article 2, his said Majesty shall possess, whether in his capacity of Grand Duke of Luxembourg, or for the purpose of being reunited to Holland, the territories whereof the boundaries are indicated below.

1st. *On the right bank of the Meuse :*

To the old Dutch enclaves on the said bank in the province of Limburg shall be added the districts of this same province on this same bank which did not belong to the States-General in 1790, in such fashion that the part of the present province of Limburg situated on the right bank of the Meuse, and comprised between this river on the west, the frontier of the Prussian territory on the east, the present frontier of the province of Liège on the south, and Dutch Guelderland on the north, shall belong henceforth wholly and entirely to H.M. the King of the Netherlands, whether in his capacity of Grand Duke of Luxembourg, or to be reunited to Holland.

2nd. *On the left bank of the Meuse :*

Starting from the most southern point of the Dutch province of North Brabant, there shall be drawn, according to the chart hereto annexed, a line which shall end at the Meuse above *Wessem*, between this place and *Stevenweert*, at the point where meet, on the left bank, the frontiers of the present arrondissement of *Ruremonde* and *Maestricht*, in such fashion that *Bergerot*, *Stamproy*, *Neer-Itteren*, *Ittervoord*, and *Thorn*, with their districts, as well as all the other places, situated to the north of this line shall form part of the Dutch territory.

The old Dutch enclaves in the province of Limburg on the left bank of the Meuse shall belong to Belgium, with the exception of the town of *Maestricht*, which, with a territory of 1,200 toises (about 8,000 feet) in radius, starting from the outer glacis of the fort on the said bank of this river, shall continue to be possessed in full sovereignty and proprietorship by H.M. the King of the Netherlands.

ARTICLE 5.

H.M. the King of the Netherlands, Grand Duke of Luxembourg, shall come to an understanding with the Germanic Confederation and the agnates of the House of Nassau about the application of the stipulations included in Articles 3 and 4, as well as about all other arrangements which the said Articles might render necessary, whether with the agnates, above mentioned, of the House of Nassau, or with the Germanic Confederation.

ARTICLE 6.

In consideration of the above territorial arrangements, each of the two parties gives up reciprocally and for ever all pretension to the territories, towns, forts, and places situated within the other's boundaries, such as they have been settled to be in Articles 1, 2, and 4.

The said boundaries shall be traced in conformity with these same Articles by demarcation commissioners, Belgic and Dutch, who shall meet as soon as possible in the town of *Maestricht*.

ARTICLE 7.

Belgium, within the limits specified in Articles 1, 2, and 4, shall form an independent and perpetually neutral State. She shall be bound to observe this same neutrality towards all other States.

ARTICLE 8.

The *drainage* of the waters of the two Flanders shall be regulated between Holland and Belgium according to the stipulations laid down on this head in Article 6 of the definitive treaty concluded between H.M. the Emperor of Germany and the States-General, 8th November, 1785 ; and, in conformity with the said Article, commissioners named by each party shall come to an understanding on the application of the provisions it sanctions.

ARTICLE 9.

The provisions of Articles 108 to 117, inclusive, of the general Act of the Congress of Vienna, relative to the free navigation of navigable streams and rivers, shall be applied to the streams and navigable rivers which separate or traverse simultaneously the Belgian and Dutch territory.

As touching especially the navigation of the Scheldt, it shall be agreed that piloting and buoys, as well as the preservation of the channels of the Scheldt below Antwerp, shall be under a common supervision; that this common supervision shall be exercised by commissioners, named for this purpose on both sides; that moderate pilotage dues shall be fixed by common agreement, and that these dues shall be the same for Dutch commerce and for Belgian commerce.—It is likewise agreed that the navigation of the waters intermediate between the Scheldt and the Rhine, for going from Antwerp to the Rhine and *vice versa*, shall remain reciprocally free, and that it shall be subject only to moderate tolls, which shall be provisionally the same for the commerce of both countries.

Commissioners shall meet, on both sides, at Antwerp, within the space of a month, both to fix the definitive and permanent amount of these tolls, and to agree upon a general regulation for the execution of the provisions of the present Article, and to comprise therein the exercise of the right of fishing and the fishery trade along the whole extent of the Scheldt, on a footing of perfect reciprocity in favour of the subjects of both countries. Meanwhile, and until the said regulation be fixed, the navigation of the navigable streams and rivers above mentioned shall remain free to the commerce of both countries, which shall adopt provisionally on this head the tariff of the convention signed on 31st March, 1831, at Mayence, for the free navigation of the Rhine, as well as the other provisions of that convention so far as they can apply to the navigable streams and rivers which separate or traverse simultaneously the Dutch territory and the Belgian territory.

ARTICLE 10.

The use of the canals which traverse simultaneously both countries shall continue to be free and common to their inhabitants. It is understood that the enjoyment thereof shall be reciprocal and on the same conditions, and that on both sides there will be on the canals only moderate navigation-dues.

ARTICLE 11.

Commercial communications by way of the town of Maestricht and that of Sittard shall remain entirely free, and shall not be impeded on any pretext whatsoever.

The use of the roads which, by traversing these two towns, lead to the frontiers of Germany, shall be subject only to a payment of moderate turnpike tolls for the keeping up of these roads, in such sort that transit traffic may meet with no obstacle, and that, in consideration of the tolls above mentioned, these roads may be kept in good condition and fit to facilitate this traffic.

ARTICLE 12.

In case there should have been in Belgium a new road made, or a new canal dug, ending at the Meuse opposite the Dutch canton of Sittard, then Belgium would be entitled to demand of Holland, who may not refuse in such a case, that the said road or said canal should be lengthened after the same plan, entirely at the charges and expense of Belgium, through the canton of Sittard up to the frontiers of Germany. This road or canal, which should serve only for commercial communication, would be constructed, at the choice of Holland, either by engineers and workmen whom Belgium would obtain

authority to employ for this purpose in the canton of Sittard, or by engineers and workmen whom Holland would provide, and who would execute at the charges of Belgium the works agreed upon, the whole without any cost at all to Holland, and without prejudice to her exclusive rights of sovereignty over the territory traversed by the road or canal in question.

The two parties would fix by common accord the amount and mode of collection of the dues and tolls which should be levied on this same road or canal.

ARTICLE 13, SECTION I.

From and after the 1st of January, 1832, Belgium, for its share of the public debt of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, shall remain charged with a sum of 8,400,000 florins (£717,500) of the Netherlands in annual interests, whereof the capitals shall be transferred from the debit of the Great Book at Amsterdam, or the debit of the general treasury of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, to the debit of the Great Book of Belgium.

SECTION 2.

The capitals transferred to, and the interests inscribed in the debit of the Great Book of Belgium, in pursuance of the preceding paragraph, to the amount of the sum total of 8,400,000 florins of the Netherlands in annual interests (£717,500), shall be considered as making part of the Belgian National Debt, and Belgium engages to make either now or for the future no distinction between this portion of the public debt, arising from her union with Holland, and any other Belgian National Debt already created or hereafter to be created.

SECTION 3.

The payment of the sum of annual interests above mentioned, of 8,400,000 florins (£717,500) of the Netherlands, shall take place regularly, from half-year to half-year, either at Brussels or at Antwerp, in ready money, without any deduction of any kind whatsoever, either now or for the future.

SECTION 4.

In consideration of the creation of this sum of 8,400,000 florins (£717,500), Belgium shall be discharged from all obligation to Holland on account of the division of the public debts of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands.

SECTION 5.

Commissioners appointed on both sides shall meet within a fortnight in the town of Utrecht, to proceed to a liquidation of the accounts of the Sinking Fund Syndicate and of the Bank of Brussels charged with the service of the general treasury of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. From this liquidation there shall arise no new charge for Belgium, the sum of 8,400,000 florins (£717,500) of annual interests comprising the whole of her liabilities. But if there be a balance from the said liquidation, Belgium and Holland shall share it in the proportion of the imposts paid by each of the two countries during their union, according to the Budgets voted by the States-General of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands.

SECTION 6.

In the liquidation of the Sinking Fund Syndicate shall be comprised the credits secured on the public lands, called *Domein-los-renten*. They are mentioned in the present Article only by way of note.

The Dutch and Belgian commissioners mentioned in Section 5 of the present Article, and who are to meet in the town of Utrecht, shall proceed, besides the liquidation with which they are charged, to the transfer of the capitals and annual interests which upon the division of the public debts of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands should fall to the charges of Belgium up to the amount of 8,400,000 florins (£717,500) of annual interests. They shall proceed also to the extradition of all archives, charts, plans, and documents whatsoever, belonging to Belgium or concerning her administration.

ARTICLE 14.

Holland having exclusively made, since 1st November, 1830, all the advances necessary for the discharge of the totality of the public debts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and having to do so still for the half-year expiring on 1st January, 1832, it is agreed that the said advances, calculated from 1st November, 1830, to 1st January, 1832, for fourteen months, in proper ratio with the sum of 8,400,000 florins (£717,500) of the Netherlands in annual interests, with which Belgium remains charged, shall be repaid in three parts to the Dutch Treasury by the Belgian Treasury. The first third of this repayment shall be settled by the Belgian Treasury with the Dutch Treasury on 1st January, 1832, the second on 1st April, and the third on 1st July, in the same year. On these two last thirds there shall accrue further to Holland interest calculated at the rate of 5 per cent. per annum, until the whole is discharged at the aforesaid dates of expiry.

ARTICLE 15.

The Port of Antwerp, agreeably to the stipulations of Article 15 of the Treaty of Paris, May 30, 1814, shall continue to be solely a commercial port.

ARTICLE 16.

Works of public or private utility, such as canals, roads, or others of a similar kind, constructed entirely or partly at the expense of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, shall belong, with the advantages and charges attached to them, to the country in which they are situated. It remains understood that the capitals borrowed for the construction of these works, and which are specifically appropriated thereto, shall be comprised in the said charges so far as they are not yet repaid, repayments already effected not giving any claim for liquidation.

ARTICLE 17.

Sequestrations which may have taken place in Belgium during the troubles, on political grounds, of any properties and hereditary estates whatsoever, shall be taken off without delay, and the enjoyment of the said properties and estates shall be forthwith restored to the lawful owners.

ARTICLE 18.

In the two countries whereof the separation takes place in consequence of the present Articles, inhabitants and owners of property, if they desire to change their domicile from one country to the other, shall have two years' leave to dispose of their property, movable or immovable, of whatsoever kind it may be, to sell it, and to take away the produce of the sales, either in coin or in other equivalents, without hindrance or payment of other duties than those which are now in force in the two countries upon changes and transfers. It is understood that renunciation is made now and for the future of the collection of all *droits d'aubaine et de détraction* on the persons and properties of Dutch in Belgium and Belgians in Holland.

ARTICLE 19.

The quality of mixed subject, as to property, shall be recognised and maintained.

ARTICLE 20.

The provisions of Articles 11 to 21, inclusive of the treaty concluded between Austria and Russia, 3rd May, 1815, which forms an integral part of the General Act of the Congress of Vienna, provisions relative to mixed properties, to the choice of domicile they are bound to make, to the rights they shall exercise as the subjects of one or the other State, and as regards neighbourhood in properties cut by the frontiers, shall be applied to such owners of property as well as properties as in Holland, in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, or in Belgium, shall be found to come within the cases provided for by the aforesaid provisions of the Acts of the Congress of Vienna. The *droits d'aubaine et de détraction* being henceforth abolished as between Holland, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and Belgium, it is understood that, amongst the provisions herein-above mentioned, those which related to the *droits d'aubaine et de détraction* shall be considered null and void in the three countries.

ARTICLE 21.

No one in the countries which undergo a change of rule shall be called to account or molested in any way because of any kind of participation direct or indirect in political events.

ARTICLE 22.

Pensions and allowances of expectants, of unemployed or retired persons, shall be paid for the future on either side to all claimants, civil as well as military, who have a right thereto conformably with the laws in force before 1st November, 1830. It is agreed that the pensions and allowances aforesaid of claimants born in the territories which now constitute Belgium shall remain at the charge of the Belgian Treasury, and the pensions and allowances of the claimants born in the territories which now constitute Holland at that of the Dutch Treasury.

ARTICLE 23.

All claims of Belgian subjects on private establishments, such as widows' funds and funds known under the denomination of *fonds des leges*, and of the chest of retired allowances, civil and military, shall be examined by the mixed commission of liquidation, of whom it is treated in Article 13, and decided after the rules which regulate those funds or charts.

The securities furnished and the payments made by Belgian accountants, the judicial deposits and consignments, shall likewise be restored to the claimants on presentation of their proofs. If under the head of the liquidations called *French* any Belgian subjects had still rights of inscription to make good, these claims shall likewise be examined and liquidated by the said Commission.

ARTICLE 24.

Immediately after the exchange of ratifications of the treaty to come between the two Powers, the necessary orders shall be sent to the commandants of the respective troops for the evacuation of the territories, towns, forts, and places which change masters. The civil authorities there shall receive also at the same time the necessary orders for the surrender of those territories, towns, forts, and places, to the commissioners who shall be appointed for that

purpose on either side. This evacuation and surrender shall take effect in such wise as to be able to be terminated within a fortnight, or if possible sooner.

ARTICLE 25.

The Courts of Austria, France, Great Britain, Prussia, and Russia, guarantee to H.M. the King of the Belgians the execution of all the Articles preceding.

ARTICLE 26.

Consequent upon the stipulations of the present treaty, there shall be peace and amity between H.M. the King of the Belgians on the one part and T.M. the Emperor of Austria, the King of the French, the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, the King of Prussia, and the Emperor of All the Russias, on the other part, their heirs and successors, their States and subjects respectively, for ever.

ARTICLE 27.

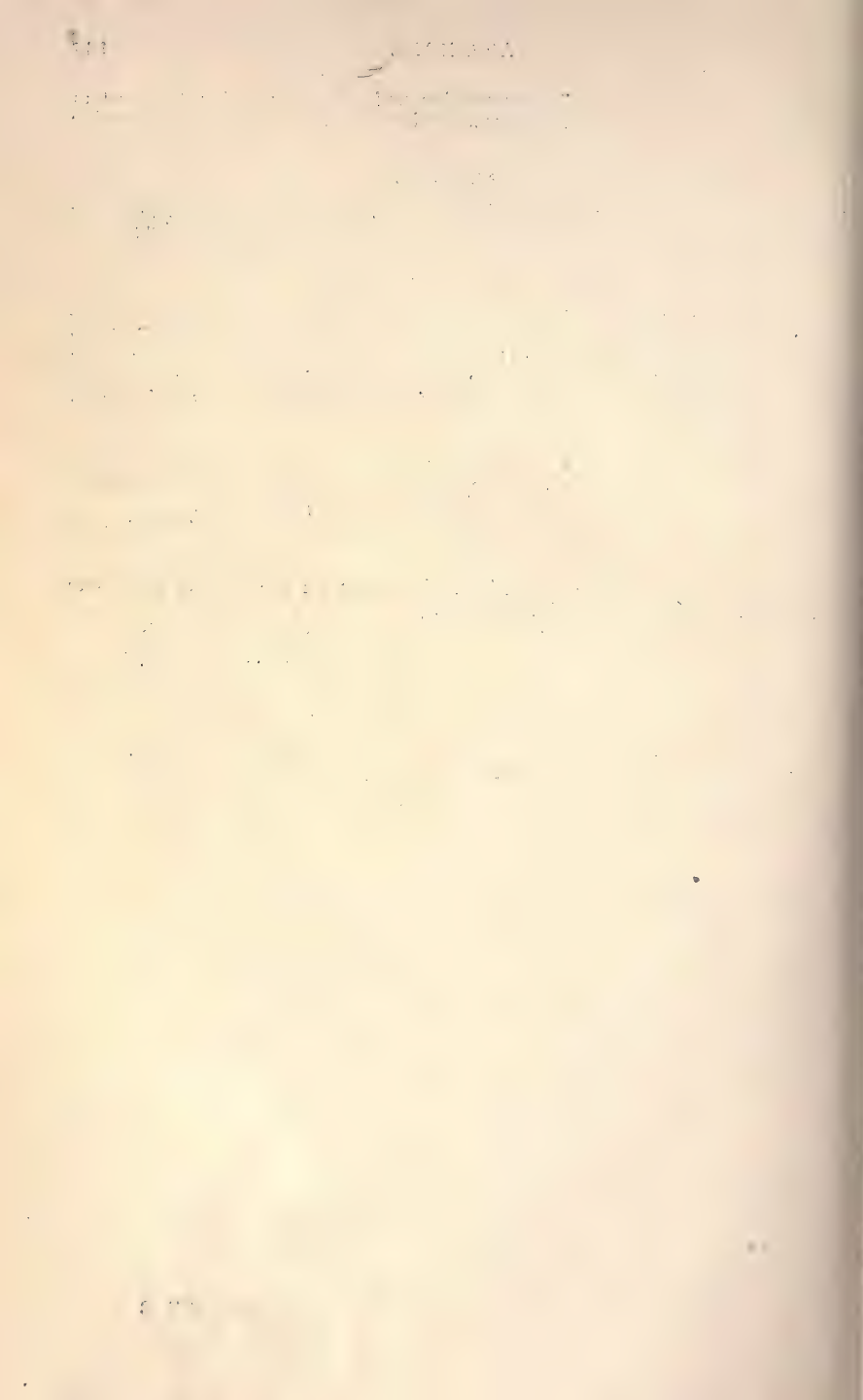
The present treaty shall be ratified, and the ratifications thereof exchanged in London, within the space of two months, or sooner if can be.

In witness whereof the Plenipotentiaries respectively have signed it and put to it their seals of arms.

Done in London, the fifteenth of November, in the year of grace one thousand eight hundred and thirty-one.

(L. S.) ESTERHAZY.
(L. S.) WESSENBERG.
(L. S.) TALLEYRAND.
(L. S.) PALMERSTON.
(L. S.) BULOW.
(L. S.) LIEVEN.
(L. S.) MATUSZEWIC.

L. S. SYLVAIN VAN DE WEYER.



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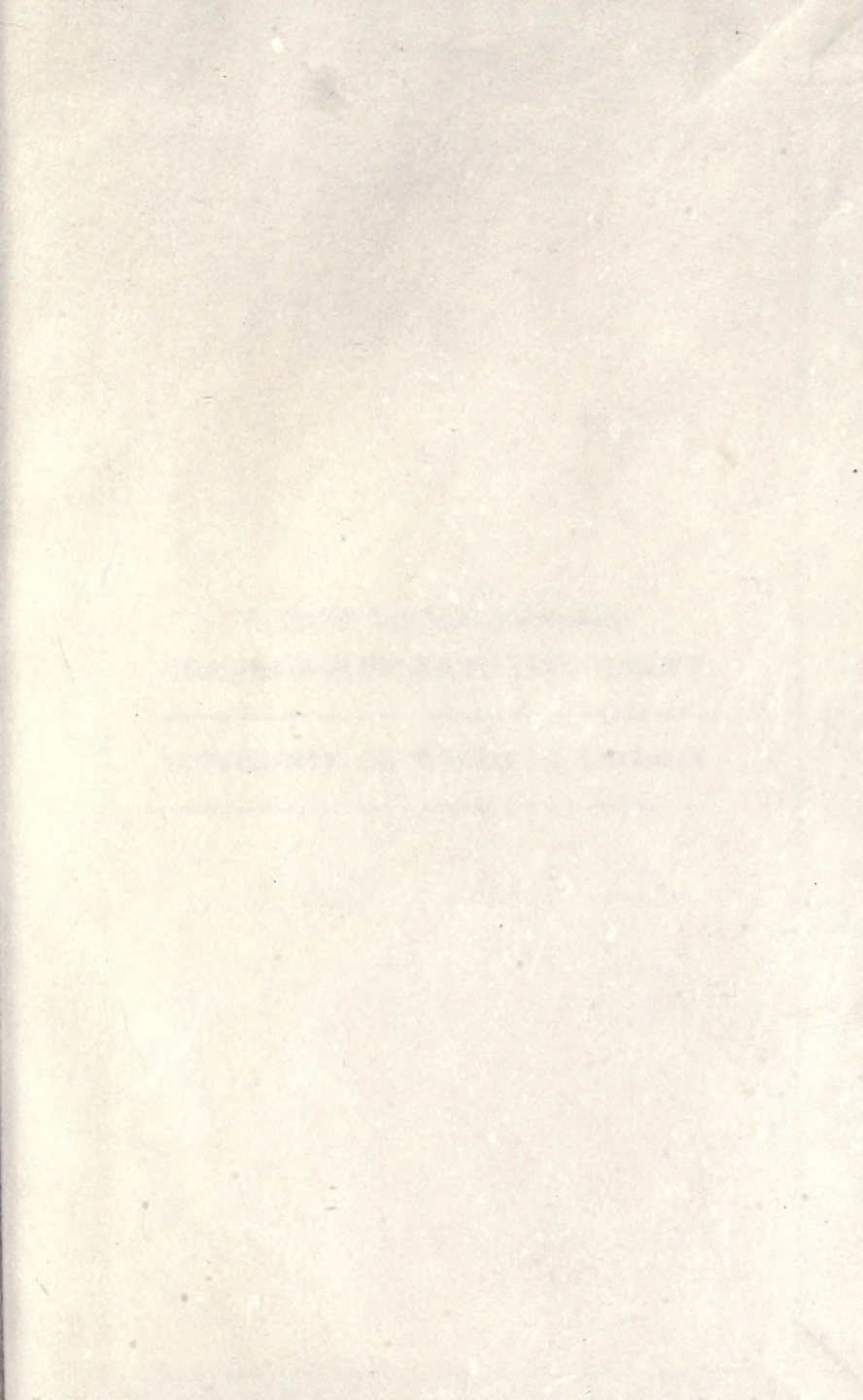
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